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EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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FROM THE EDITORS

Starting from this issue, Educational Planning has developed into a fully on-line journal to be posted on the website of the International Society for Educational Planning. It continues to be published four times a year with no space limitation and a wider universal circulation. In addition, book reviewers are invited to submit their book reviews in a newly developed column of the journal.

This issue of Educational Planning includes planning topics such as biliteracy and civic readiness, diversity planning, women educational leadership and community services in higher education. Teacher planning issues are also covered: teacher-researcher identity; quiet quitting; teacher leadership and student self-efficacy.

In the first article, Poland and Falzone analyze lessons learned from a collaborative partnership between a higher education institution and a local educational agency in implementing two performance indicators: the Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) and the Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR).

In the second article, Assefa and Mujtaba explore effective diversity management strategies in education, emphasizing their alignment with the United Nations 2030 and African Union 2063 Agendas. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how diversity management enriches educational practices and supports the broader goals of equity and social cohesion.

In the third article, Riegel, Charrois, Dekker and Ferguson investigate the nuanced dimensions of the teacher-researcher identity, focusing on teachers' perceptions of teachers as researchers within the educational landscape.

In the fourth article, Ozalp, Ozen and Turan investigate the impact of teacher leadership on students' self-efficacy, considering the intermediary functions of students' career adaptability. This study concludes that teacher-classroom leadership makes a difference in students' self-efficacy.

The fifth article by Yilmaz, Celik and Arik is aimed at investigating the opinions of teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Türkiye regarding the quiet quitting behaviors they observed in teachers.

Then, Ahmadzai, Momand, Zulkifal and Mujtaba follow by presenting a study to explore the understanding of societal factors influencing women's leadership positions in the public sector of Afghanistan. The authors concluded by making many constructive recommendations to uphold women's leadership roles in Afghanistan.

The next article by Negassa reports on his study of the challenges facing faculty in implementing community service mission in Ethiopia. Negassa found many institutional difficulties and offered recommendations to address the issue.

In the last article of this issue, Kidane and Botoro examine the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in private primary schools of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Educational Planning is published to provide a forum for international scholars to share their educational perspectives particularly those that relate to their countries. In this issue, we can easily witness that the journal is achieving its intended purpose of global sharing of educational planning ideas.

Editor: Tak Cheung Chan
Associate Editors: Walt Polka and Holly Catalfamo
Assistant Editor: Selahattin Turan

January, 2025.

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EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL POLICY AT MACRO AND MICRO LEVELS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEALS OF BILITERACY AND CIVIC READINESS

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, President Obama signed the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a significant United States education policy. ESSA replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, preserving certain aspects of standardized testing while introducing newfound flexibility for states and local educational agencies in shaping their accountability systems and school improvement strategies. In response to this federal mandate, state education departments have been integrating two performance indicators into their accountability plan, a Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) and a Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR). Although the seals indicate a growing emphasis on critical inquiry, civic engagement, and the importance of linguistic diversity in a global economy, the rapid adoption gives reason for pause, as there is limited research indicating the effectiveness of either seal. By analyzing lessons learned from a collaborative partnership between a higher education institution and a local educational agency implementing the seals, this paper provides professional commentary highlighting the intersection of macro-level policy with micro-level practices and raises concerns related to the accessibility and the equity of current seal implementation models. Additionally, it calls for educational researchers to use the seals as a way to examine the impact of policy mandates from the mega, macro, and micro environments.

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, President Obama signed the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a significant US education policy governing K–12 public education. ESSA (2015) replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), preserving certain aspects of standardized testing while introducing flexibility for states and local educational agencies (LEAs) in shaping their accountability systems and school improvement strategies. Under the revised ESSA (2015), states have the authority to encompass a broader spectrum of indicators for school success beyond traditional test scores. To secure federal funding, states are now required to establish their accountability frameworks and methods for identifying schools in need of additional assistance. ESSA (2015) affords states the autonomy to determine the metrics and measures used in these accountability systems, emphasizing a more comprehensive approach to evaluating educational success. States must define their objectives for accountability, establish performance benchmarks, devise criteria for identifying struggling schools, and institute interventions to support such institutions. Furthermore, the law emphasizes the significance of preparing students for college, career, and civic participation, with particular attention to addressing the unique needs of English language learners (ELL), students with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations (Camera, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; McGuinn, 2019; Thomas & Brady, 2005).

In response to this federal mandate, state education departments have been integrating a Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) and a Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR) into their accountability systems. These seals are bestowed upon high school students who have demonstrated a high level of proficiency in world languages and/or civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. While the creation of these seals is well-intentioned, local implementation of educational policy gives rise to challenges associated with accessibility and equity. As policies are formulated and enacted at the federal and state levels, educational researchers are encouraged to consider and explore the implications of federal and state policy on local-level practice. In essence, policy mandates are designed with specific goals and implemented promptly. However, educational researchers should continuously question whether the policy achieved its intended goals and how effectively it did so. This paper is not an empirical study; instead, it serves as a professional commentary aimed at contributing to the discussion on evaluating the intersection of macro-level policy and micro-level practices. Drawing on the experiences of a P-20 partnership created to support a local educational agency with policy implementation, the authors examine the implications of the ESSA (2015) policy mandates for local educational agencies in relation to the SoBL and SoCR. This analysis reflects lessons learned from the collaborative partnership that was designed to support high school students in achieving their educational seals, particularly in the context of implementing a new state mandate.

Historical Context of Policy

The origins of ESSA (2015) can be traced back to the federal education law known as the United States Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965). Over the years, ESEA (1965) has gone through various adjustments and reauthorizations, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). Despite these changes, its fundamental goal has consistently remained the same: to be the primary source of federal financial assistance for education and to specifically target the unique needs of vulnerable populations such as African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, English language learners, and female students. Acts such as the Bilingual Education Act of 1967, the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974, and Indian Education Act of 1972 have been implemented into the original ESEA (1965) legislation over the years to address categorical concerns of such disadvantaged populations (Judd, 1977; Sanchez, 1973; Simonson & Menzer, 1984; White et al., 1994; Whiteman, 1986).

Throughout the history of ESEA (1965) legislation, State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) have been required to provide an annual report card that includes information about how the state and specific LEAs have fared on a variety of student and school performance metrics such as assessments, per-pupil expenditures, teacher qualifications, and tenure. ESSA (2015), which is the most recent reauthorization of ESEA (1965), awarded states far more authority and freedom in determining how they guide, monitor, and measure student and school success (Hackman et al., 2019; McGuinn, 2016; Salvaert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). By expanding the framework for student performance accountability, states have been able to move away from a high-stake testing environment to gauge a school's effectiveness established under NCLB (2001) and move toward a more holistic approach. This embraces the teaching of transferable skills that are applicable in the real world and allows for multiple measures of student and school success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). While NCLB (2001) focused on standardized testing as the sole measure of accountability, which led to a 'teaching to the test' mentality, ESSA (2015) provides more flexibility in designing systems for accountability. Under ESSA (2015), states must outline their accountability goals, measures of success, methods to determine schools in need of assistance, and interventions for struggling schools by incorporating a variety of measures such as academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rates, progress towards English language proficiency, and school quality/student success (SQ/SS) as indicators of school success (Kaput, 2018).

Using New York State as an example, in the state's ESSA accountability plan for high school (grades 9-12), the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has selected the college, career, and civic readiness index as an accountability measure, per stakeholder feedback, in part, because it will allow LEAs to use a variety of indicators to assess school and student quality. Additionally, it encourages LEAs to provide students with access to a variety of advanced coursework to support student transition into adult life (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2024c). Such indicators include the type of diploma earned, Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate exams, skills, and achievement commencement credentials, Career Development and Occupational Standards endorsement, and most recently, a SoBL and a SoCR. NYSED indicates that using the college, career, and civic readiness index as a means to measure SQ/SS will allow for the possibility of providing additional points for students who meet more than one measure, enabling the expansion to include additional measures such as enrollment in and completion of college-level dual credit courses and post-secondary enrollment (Kaput, 2018; NYSED, 2024c).

As a result, NYSED has launched two initiatives, the SoBL and the SoCR, for high school graduates to serve as just one of the accountability indicators for SQ/SS. The seal is an emblem that is placed on a graduating student's high school diploma as a formal recognition that the student has attained a high level of proficiency in English and additional world languages and/or civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and is designed to convey to both employers and universities the graduate's unique skills (Hancock & Davin, 2020; NYSED, 2023; NYSED, 2024a; NYSED, 2024c; Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). In addition, the intent behind the implementation of this new initiative is that it will improve high school graduation rates, especially for the ELL population, and broaden student's college and career opportunities; however, there is no indication if or how this result might be assessed (Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020).

By 2015, only a few states had been exploring or adopting the SoBL; however, after the ESSA (2015) passage, states quickly adopted the SoBL. Today, all 50 states have adopted some version of the SoBL as an accountability measure. In addition, as states explored additional performance indicators to meet the college, career, and civic readiness metric, a SoCR emerged. The concept of a SoCR, along with the SoBL, indicates a growing emphasis on critical inquiry, civic engagement, and the importance of linguistic diversity in a global economy. However, the rapid adoption of the SoBL and the current trend for the SoCR to be on the same trajectory gives reason for pause, as limited research indicates its effectiveness in meeting the intended targets. As Burnet (2017) stated, "In an era of promoting evidence-based practices, it is remarkable for a policy [the SoBL] to spread so rapidly without any evidence of its benefits" (p. 15). The SoCR is headed in the same direction, rapid adoption without evidence of success.

The Seal of Biliteracy as an Accountability Measure

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is the result of a grassroots movement beginning in 2008 that was led by Californians Together, an educational advocacy group that aimed to challenge monolingual ideologies in America (Californians Together, 2023; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Heineke & Davin, 2020). Advocating for the needs of Emergent Bilingual Learners (EBLs), Californians Together developed the concept of a SoBL to recognize the linguistic diversity of California's students, to incentivize students to increase their proficiency in multiple languages, and encourage a shift in the nation's approach to teaching world language. California adopted the SoBL policy in 2011, becoming the first state to offer it to graduating seniors who demonstrate proficiency in speaking, writing, and reading in two or more languages.

In 2012, the New York State (NYS) legislature acknowledged the benefit of a SoBL to advance global literacy (NYSED, 2023) and implemented a SoBL policy, making NYS the second state to adopt the seal in 2013, followed by Texas and Illinois. In the 2015- 2016 school year, 14 NYS Board of Regents schools awarded the first NYS Seal of Biliteracy to 284 students. Of the 284 students, 106 were classified as previously or currently receiving English a new language instruction (NYSED, 2021). Since its adoption, NYS has awarded this distinction to over 33,000 students across the state, including public, charter, and non-public high schools. (NYSED, 2024).

The criteria for earning the Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is established as a statewide standard. However, local education agencies (LEAs) have the flexibility to define criteria metrics for pathway awards, with some expanding these requirements to acknowledge additional aspects of biliteracy (Seal of Biliteracy, 2024). For example, in NYS, students must demonstrate intermediate-high proficiency in English and the required level of proficiency in one or more world languages set forth by the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages, adopted by the NYS Board of Regents in March 2021. Students can earn points toward the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSBB) in several ways, including:

> Completing coursework in English and/or a world language with an average of 85% or better; completing a Home Language Arts Program with an average of 85% or better; earning a set score on an approved assessment in English and/or a world language; demonstrating successful completion of coursework from a nation outside the U.S.; and completing and presenting a culminating project in English and/or a world language that demonstrates the required level of proficiency in all three modes of communication including interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. (NYSED, 2023).

The SoBL recognizes and promotes multilingualism across the nation. Since this initiative has gained popularity, another initiative has emerged to emphasize the importance of civic education in American schools.

The Seal of Civic Readiness as an Accountability Measure

Unlike the SoBL, which resulted from a grassroots effort to address an educational concern, the SoCR emerges from the complex and evolving history of education and the role civic education should have in US schools. Although the history of civic education is beyond the scope of this article, it is essential to note that it has been a topic of scholarship since the nation's inception. (Beadie & Burkholder, 2021; Cogan, 1999; Murphy, 2007; O'Brien, 2021; Quigley,1999; Tozer, 2021; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Recently, there has been a resurgence of attention to civic education. Factors such as declining civic knowledge, political polarization, and low levels of political participation have fueled efforts to revitalize civic education[1] and initiatives like the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute and iCivics aim to counter the declining trends in civic awareness (Annenberg, 2022; Barrett & Greene, 2017; Healy, 2022; Levin & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017; Melville et al., 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Putnam, 1995; Rogers, 2017). States are reviewing and revising their civic curriculum to authentically integrate civic education, hoping to build a sense of community, agency, and responsibility in youth while preparing them for a lifetime of active democratic participation (Levin & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017). Despite these efforts, there remains a need to move beyond mere content-based approaches to build the skills needed for successful civic engagement (Kissinger et al., 2022; Shapiro & Brown, 2018). One avenue the states are pursuing to enhance their approach is with the adoption of a SoCR.

For example, in 2018, NYSED included a Civic Readiness Index in their ESSA plan and established a task force to explore the adoption of a SoCR. As of March 2024, 534 schools in NYS

1 See the Annenberg Public Policy Center's *Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey* and the National Center for Educational Statistics' *National Assessment of Educational Progress NAEP civics assessment* for specifics regarding constitutional knowledge of surveyed Americans.

have applied to participate in the SoCR. As outlined in the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness Handbook (2024a), the SoCR builds on the foundation of civic education already established in NYS and serves as a way to measure college, career, and civic readiness as outlined in the ESSA accountability plan. Specifically, civic readiness is “the ability to make a positive difference in the public life of our communities through the combination of civic knowledge, skills and actions, mindsets, and experience” (p. 6). It incorporates four domains: civic knowledge, civic mindsets, civic skills and actions, and civic experiences. To earn the SoCR, students need to achieve six points from various options, including passing NYS Regents exams, completing a civic project, service learning, and/or work-based learning. In essence, the SoCR recognizes students who have acquired the knowledge, skills, actions, mindsets, and dispositions necessary to be productive citizens, engage responsibly in democracy, use informed inquiry to make decisions, and provide evidence to colleges and future employers that they value civic engagement and scholarship.

P-20 Collaborative Seal Program

New York State's leadership in implementing the SoBL and the SoCR, tasked LEAs with developing supportive practices. While the state provided guidance, the specifics and details of implementation, including financial resources, parent communication, student recruitment, and curriculum development, were left to the LEAs. Seeking to capitalize upon recently enacted legislation and to address these challenges, we, the authors, formed a collaborative partnership between our higher education institution and a local LEA. We selected an LEA that has an existing relationship with the university, one based on a long-standing tradition of trust and collaboration, to pilot a program for high school students. The school district, identified as a district in need of assistance by NYS, serves over 6,000 diverse students, including over 60% non-white, approximately 20% classified with a disability, 80% economically disadvantaged, and 10% identified as English language learners (ELLs) (New York State Education Department, n.d.).

The goal of our partnership was to create a collaborative program that supported the LEA with implementation. In addition, it specifically sought to support high school students from the LEA in successfully completing the SoBL and SoCR. To achieve this, we enrolled teacher candidates in a special topics course that explored federal education policy from 1965 to the present, focusing on the seals. The course explored effective educational policy implementation from the federal level to the local level. In essence, the course focused on the intersection of macro-level policy with micro-level practices. Through this coursework, teacher candidates mentored high school students pursuing their seals by providing targeted lessons, individualized instruction at their school, and hosting collaborative learning opportunities on campus. In addition, university faculty were invited to host workshops for the high school students and to serve as external evaluators for student presentations and capstone projects required to earn the seals.

The collaborative partnership underscores the necessity for deeper exploration into the intersection of macro-level policy and micro-level practices. During the planning and implementation phases, we gathered valuable insights through various data collection points, including observations, conversations, and reflective journals. Numerous meetings with school district personnel helped us finalize the program logistics, as we learned their implementation process. Discussions with local state representatives provided additional context, while conversations with teachers and reflections from both teacher candidates and high school students revealed a range of perspectives. As participants voiced their viewpoints regarding the requirements for students to earn the seals, critical questions arose about the effectiveness of macro-level policies at the micro level. As a result, it became evident that further research is necessary to ensure the integrity of the policy is maintained and practices are aligned with the initial intent of the policy.

Macro vs. Micro Implementation Analysis of the Seals of Biliteracy and Civic Readiness Policy

Based on our collaborative partnership, we have identified two areas of concern during local-level implementation that indicate a disparity between federal, state, and local levels and its intended outcomes, specifically related to accessibility and equity. For this paper, we rely upon the “4-A Framework of the Human Rights Obligations” by Tomasevski (2001) to define accessibility, which simply means access to education, free of obstacles. Additionally, we use Ainscow et al.'s (2012) "ecology of equity" as our definition of equity, recognizing that equitable outcomes and educational experiences for students are not solely dependent on the educational practices of their teachers. Equitability depends on various interacting processes, including local demographics, cultural histories, economic realities, and socio-economic factors influencing school communities. As Ainscow et al. (2020) state, one way of looking at the complexity of equity in education is to think about educational practices in three realms: within school, between schools, and beyond school (p.15). Although there is robust research in the areas of bilingualism and civic education, studies focused on the implementation of the seals are still in their infancy stage. Since the SoBL has been in existence longer, there is some research documenting initial themes related to equity and accessibility. Similar patterns are also emerging for the SoCR. We encourage educational researchers to monitor the concerns outlined below.

Accessibility

Based on anecdotal observations and conversations during our collaborative partnership, we realized that not all students had equal opportunity to earn a seal, participate in the program, or access the same resources within the district. This raised important questions about accessibility. Do all students in the United States have the opportunity to earn a seal without limitations? Further research confirmed our concerns, prompting us to identify four key areas preventing access to earn a seal that should be monitored. The first factor affecting accessibility is whether all students have the opportunity to earn a seal. Unfortunately, as we continue to explore policies related to the seals, it is evident that not all students have access. For example, when our collaborative program began, not all states offered either seal nor did they require LEAs to provide the option. Although all 50 states now offer a SoBL, full adoption took over ten years. Regarding the SoCR, currently, only seven states have adopted the seal and one state has opted to offer the seal at the school level, rather than for individual students. In addition, LEA participation is optional for many states, and LEAs need to apply and reapply yearly (Kissinger et al., 2022; NYSED, 2024b; National Council for Social Studies, 2024).

The second area of concern regarding accessibility is related to who is eligible and/or targeted to earn the seal. Despite the intended purpose of the SoBL, current research indicates that most states have framed the SoBL in a way that primarily focuses on students in world language classes rather than non-native English language learners (Olsen & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2024). The majority of states tend to promote "elite bilingualism" among English-dominant students, reflecting what Subtirelu et al. (2019) refer to as a Global Human Capital (GHC) discourse within their policy construction. This perspective grounds the policy on the premise that teaching world languages benefits students' marketability in the global economy and caters to the needs of students enrolled in world language courses (Marichal et al., 2021). However, this approach falls short of promoting a language immersion discourse that prioritizes bilingualism and non-native English learners' unique needs. Such discourse is essential in addressing the inequities faced by vulnerable populations based on language, race, and social class, as Subtirelu et al. (2019) term it, an Equity/Heritage

(EH) discourse. This emphasis on world language students, rather than ELLs, has led to issues of accessibility within the implementation of the SoBL for non-native English-speaking students.

Although the Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR) is a newer initiative without an extensive body of research, not all states offer it yet. Current requirements for LEAs to participate and for students to earn the seal vary by LEA and state, which limits access for some students based on specific eligibility criteria (Kissinger et al., 2022; National Council for Social Studies, 2024). For instance, in comparing the requirements between New York and Arizona, only public schools can participate in Arizona, whereas in New York, any school can participate. In New York, students need to complete four credits in social studies and can earn additional points based on their performance on the Regents exams. In addition, they can complete a capstone project while in middle school to earn additional points. In contrast, in Arizona, students must complete all requirements while in grades 9-12. They also need to complete only three credits of social studies, rather than four, but with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and pass a civics test with a score of 70. Additionally, since 2019, Tennessee has offered a Governor's Civics Seal, which is designed to recognize districts and schools for their excellence in creating a comprehensive civics educational experience for students. However, students can not earn a seal for their diploma. Students in Tennessee and 44 other states do not currently have access to earn a SoCR (National Council for Social Studies, 2024; Tennessee, 2024).

A third area affecting accessibility is related to local community needs and is an identified concern in the literature. For example, as Jansa & Brezicha (2017) articulate, some districts opt not to offer the SoBL because stakeholders deem the SoBL unnecessary in their community. Since the SoBL program is voluntary and not mandated at the state or federal level, LEAs must review how to best meet the state reporting requirements with their limited funds. This exclusionary approach deprives deserving students of the chance to engage with the program and develop their language skills. As Davin and Heineke (2018) indicate, students sought the SoBL because they saw value in using the second language in their local communities. However, not all communities have or value the linguistic diversity that would make the acquisition of a second language needed.

A fourth area of concern regarding accessibility emerged when we realized that the partner LEA only offers Spanish in their World Language Department. This limitation means that students transferring into the LEA with experience in a different world language or possessing a heritage language other than Spanish cannot access a robust language program in their language of choice. Access to the necessary programming needed to successfully meet the criteria of the seal for many students is limited, and research supports this concern. Recent studies concerning the SoBL have brought to light that, historically, world language education has not received significant priority in K-12 state education policies and initiatives (Castro Santana, 2014; Crawford, 2000; Heineke & Davin, 2020). In addition, the recent emphasis on Common Core and STEM disciplines has further diminished the importance of world language education and a lack of consideration for the unique needs of ELLs within world language policy frameworks. The majority of states lack graduation policies that require world language education or require only the minimum needed to meet college entrance requirements. Their policies do not align with best practices for fostering successful language learning and second language proficiency. In most cases, language instruction only begins in high school, with a two-year requirement, rather than offering elementary immersion programs. Additionally, opportunities for extended sequences of world language study are limited, making it challenging for both bilingual and native English learners to fulfill the requirements needed to earn the SoBL (Garraffa et al., 2020; Kissinger et al., 2022; Marichal et al., 2021). In addition, the type of programming and curriculum to support students in earning the SoCR varies dramatically as well between LEAs and states, creating an accessibility issue. For example, with regard to the SoCR, only 14 states require a course in government or civics, and five states require service learning (Kissinger et al., 2022). However, not all students can meet the service hours due to various challenges, such as transportation issues, employment, family commitments, and other barriers. Nor do all schools offer the same extracurricular activities that students can participate in to meet the service learning or civic participation requirements.

Equity

Concerns regarding the equity of micro-level practices, including language proficiency implementation models and incentives, are identified in the literature regarding the SoBL (Davin, 2021; Davin et al., 2018; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017; Marichal et al., 2021; Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). Ainscow et al.'s (2012) "ecology of equity" framework highlights the importance of addressing equity at various levels, including micro-level practices. This framework applies to our concerns as the requirements students must meet to earn the seals vary within schools, between schools, and beyond schools limiting the opportunity for all students to succeed.

The concern regarding the equitability of language proficiency assessments and the required proficiency levels has been raised due to the variations among states and the lack of consistency in the methods and requirements used for students to demonstrate proficiency in other languages. Research conducted by Heineke et al. (2018) and others highlights this concern (Davin et al., 2018; Davin & Heineke, 2017; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017; Heineke & Davin, 2020; Mitchell, 2019; Subtirelu et al., 2019). While some states mandate assessment exams to gauge proficiency, others stipulate a specific score on exams like the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate, and others have adopted a portfolio-based approach but without clear and standardized state guidelines, leaving LEAs to define the expectations (Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). Such variations raise doubts about the fairness and uniformity of the SoBL across different educational systems.

In addition, Mitchell (2019) highlights that the criteria for earning the SoBL holds English language learners to higher standards in their second language (which is English) than native English speakers in their second language (the world language they are studying) by requiring ELL's to achieve the same level of proficiency on the English assessments as their native English-speaking peers. This creates a discriminatory situation in states that rely solely on assessments to demonstrate proficiency in a second language. Furthermore, language proficiency assessments are currently limited to only a few languages, often excluding the native languages of non-native English language learners. The lack of available assessments prevents non-native English language learners from demonstrating their proficiency in their mother tongue, putting these students in a position where they need to master a third language. As Subtirelu et al. (2019), state:

> First, the idea that the Seal will be used to "encourage students to study languages," as suggested by the Seal Web site and most states' policies, directs attention away from the possibility that many language-minoritized students already are bilingual and/or biliterate but lack formal recognition for their linguistic skills. Nothing in any of the policies precludes the granting of Seals to students who are proficient in English and a home or heritage language that they have had little or no opportunity to formally study. (p. 377)

Additionally, the assessments offered typically focus on languages commonly taught in US high school world language classes, such as Spanish and French, thereby disregarding many languages in which English language learners (ELLs) may be literate in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Davin et al., 2018; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017; Mitchell, 2019).

Lastly, the proficiency assessments usually have an associated cost, a cost not always absorbed at the state or local level, which can disenfranchise low-income families who cannot afford them (Davin et al., 2018; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017). The manner in which students demonstrate their proficiency to earn the seals reflects inequities regarding expectations and available resources. This issue applies to both the SoCR and the SoBL. Despite the SoCR being a newer initiative, discrepancies between SEAs and LEAs are already apparent.

A second area of concern regarding equity relates to how SEAs and LEAs implement their seal program. With regard to the SoBL, research conducted by Salavert & Szalkiewicz (2020), Marichal et al. (2021), and Davin and Heineke (2018) have brought attention to the complexity of the implementation process and the importance of consistency in communication efforts. It involves working collaboratively, creating school and district-wide communication and reporting systems, revising curricula, creating strategic programming, and developing new materials and books to support the program. However, this complexity may unintentionally lead to the exclusion of a significant portion of the student body, as initial participation often depends on the voluntary involvement of schools and the leadership of world language teachers. Current communication efforts seem to predominantly target high-achieving students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses while overlooking English language learners (ELLs) and their families. Furthermore, information about the program and its benefits is not adequately presented in multiple languages to meet the linguistic needs of ELL populations. This communication gap severely hinders ELLs from fully participating in the program and accessing the opportunities it offers (Davin et al., 2018; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017). Moreover, the absence of extended sequences of study and limited language offerings can hinder students from taking world language courses earlier in their academic journey, thereby ensuring they have sufficient time to achieve the required proficiency levels. This communication gap hinders students from fully participating in the program and benefiting from its opportunities.

In addition, some districts may choose to create a K-12 systemic approach to the seal. For example, some districts provide opportunities for students to participate in additional pathways, including a preschool pathway award: "Becoming Bilingual," elementary school pathway awards, and middle school awards, as well as the high school state SoBL. These additional pathways affirm the value of bilingualism and encourage a K-12 systemic approach, providing more opportunities for linguistic diversity among current and ever ELLs as well as never ELLs[2] (Seal of Biliteracy, 2024a).

Although, as of June 2024, the SoBL has been adopted by all 50 states, it is essential to note that implementation varies as each state has its own unique policies and expectations regarding the definition, achievement, incentives, and evaluation of the SoBL (Californians, 2023; Hackman et al., 2019). There is a wide range of language proficiency requirements across state seal policies for both world languages and English. For example, states such as Florida, Louisiana, and Texas permit students to demonstrate proficiency through successfully completing coursework, or seat time, and Grade Point Average (GPA). In contrast, states such as Minnesota, Nevada, and Virginia require scores from language proficiency assessments. Furthermore, states' policies vary regarding the acceptable score received on the assessments. In Arizona, students must achieve intermediate mid, whereas in Delaware, they need to achieve an advanced low. Similar discrepancies in demonstrating English proficiency are seen across states' policies as well (Heineke et al., 2018).

2 Ever ELLs refers to any student who had been identified as an ELL during their schooling experience but has exited ELL services; whereas, never ELLs refers to any student who has not been identified as an ELL.

A third concern regarding the equitability of the seals is how they incentivize students. From our work with the partnership, students shared their perceptions of completing the Seals anecdotally. During the micro-level implementation, we encountered thoughts such as "What is the point?" and "Why does it matter?". Students noted a lack of incentives to complete the seal and that earning it at the end of their senior year made no difference in college acceptance (Davin & Heineke, 2017). In our experience, high school seniors who were initially on track to earn the seals opted not to because of the time commitment, lack of support, and the realization that the seal on the diploma did not necessarily open doors for college admissions, especially since many had already been accepted to their chosen college. Essentially, there was no tangible incentive for students in NYS to earn the seals. As Davin et al. (2023) explain, more research is needed to understand the impact earning the SoBL is having on students post-graduation.

Despite consistent perceptions of the SoBL as beneficial among students, teachers, and administrators (Davin, 2021; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Hancock & Davin, 2019), there is limited research to support its actual advantage in postsecondary admissions, particularly in New York State (NYS). This limitation stems from the timing of the SoBL award, which occurs in May of the student's senior year after completing the college admissions process and being accepted into university. While Davin and Heineke (2018) identified one potential benefit for students in the form of earning college credit, specifically for those who may not have performed well on AP exams, this credit-earning option appears to be unique to universities in Illinois and Minnesota and may not apply elsewhere (Davin, 2021; Heineke et al., 2018). Another widely held belief is that the SoBL enhances students' transcripts when applying for college admission or employment, suggesting a competitive advantage. However, as Salavert and Szalkiewicz (2020) point out, there is a lack of concrete evidence or research to substantiate this claim. Notably, a survey conducted by Callahan and Gándara (2014) in California revealed that while most universities and businesses were unaware of the seal, 66% of them expressed a preference for bilingual employees. In summary, while the SoBL is perceived positively by those involved in its implementation, further research is essential to comprehensively assess its impact on post-secondary opportunities.

Given that the SoBL and the SoCR are primarily voluntary, creating the situation within most states that districts and schools must elect to participate, variables such as knowledge about the policy, resources, school setting, and school personnel impact implementation decisions and the overall effectiveness of the Seals (Burnet, 2020). In addition, as Heineke and Davin (2020) noted in their exploration of the SoBL policy implementation, states that embraced multiple stakeholders, including universities, had a more positive impact upon policy implementation. Specifically, by including higher education in policy creation, states were able to overcome specific challenges, such as the limited world language assessments, professional development and training, and provide tangible rewards for students completing the seal, such as college credit. For example, as Heineke and Davin (2020) state, “In Minnesota and Illinois, stakeholders recognized the importance of universities when writing the legislation, and the award became associated with college credit” (p. 632). Although the seals are meant to be one of many pathways that students can pursue and demonstrate excellence in, our experience reinforces that we need to carefully monitor the implementation of both seals to ensure all students are able to access and pursue the seals in an equal and equitable manner.

IMPLICATIONS TO EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The current educational landscape is evolving rapidly as K-12 and higher education institutions respond to policy shifts, societal demands, technological advancements, and the need for improved outcomes. When K-12 schools and higher education institutions collaborate on developing local practices that support policy mandates, these P-20 partnerships can provide valuable insights for effective planning. By bridging the gap between policy creation and local implementation, critical oversights related to equity and accessibility become evident and can be addressed. This paper examined how a P-20 partnership identified micro-level challenges in achieving policy objectives. The shared concerns of K-12 and higher education partners illuminated the convergence of macro and micro-level policy initiatives and their potential effects on students' educational experiences. The findings from our collaborative partnership emphasize the importance of aligning macro-level policies with local-level realities to improve students' educational experiences. Thus, we offer the following considerations for educational planning.

When planning for the implementation of innovative educational policies at the local level, a thorough review of literature can provide valuable insights. This research helps identify best practices in areas such as recruitment, communication within and among school community members, financial constraints, assessment logistics, and program management. We encourage educational leaders to explore the most effective ways to recruit students, streamline communication efforts and assessments, and allocate resources to ensure successful implementation. Relying on research-based best practices creates comprehensive stakeholder buy-in that is representative of the unique needs of school personnel, students, families, and the broader community. In addition, when K-12 and higher education institutions partner on action-based research, insights from the collaboration can continue to improve current practice. This can be seen in the past ten years of research on the SoBL and in the preliminary research on the SoCR. Findings suggest some positive outcomes from the widespread adoption of the SoBL nationwide that can guide future practice (Davin et al., 2018; O'Rourke et al., 2016; Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). For example, the SoBL has driven a shift towards proficiency-based practices in language education, including the integration of Can-Do statements, individualized goal setting, real-world performance tasks, thematic units, targeted instruction for all language skills, and a focus on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) National Standards. This trend toward a proficiency-based language approach has been furthered by state implementation of the SoBL (Davin et al., 2018; Garraffa et al., 2020; Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). Thus, one way in which schools can refine their program is by providing professional development that emphasizes a proficiency-based approach to world language and the instructional strategies that best align to that approach. In addition, much of this research is the result of action-based research that was conducted in partnership with K-12 institutions and would not have been possible without collaborative partnership.

Furthermore, to implement fair and equitable programs, school leaders must continuously advocate for adjustments to State Education Department (SED) policies. This includes understanding policy implications and making necessary modifications to ensure that local level practices serve all students, regardless of background. To accomplish this, additional data are needed to support anecdotal observations and perspectives. For example, Davin et al. (2018) reported an increase in world language student retention and enrollment at the local level due to the SoBL. This aligns with findings from Hancock and Davin (2020) and Davin and Heineke (2018), indicating that students see earning the SoBL and the acquisition of a second language as beneficial in a globally diverse society, advantageous for post-secondary education and employment, and valuable for community engagement. In addition, linguistically diverse students perceived earning the SoBL as beneficial for communicating with family, maintaining a connection to their cultural and linguistic heritage, and taking pride in being bilingual (Marichal et al., 2021). Given these findings, one way in which higher education institutions can support K-12 schools is by advocating, developing, and promoting the use of articulation agreements to award college-credit for students who earn the seal and by prioritizing these students in the admissions process. By aligning the efforts of both K-12 and higher education institutions, innovative programs, such as the seal program, can be a meaningful component of a student's educational journey, preparing them for success in a post-secondary, global, multilingual world.

CONCLUSION

Questions remain about the impact the seals have on school and student performance metrics related to student achievement, graduation rates, employment opportunities, and college acceptance rates. As states refine their ESSA accountability plans, reviewing current research on the seals and conducting further studies will provide valuable insight for local policy implementation as well as state and federal level policy adjustment. In addition, the integration of policy mandates, such as those under ESSA, into educational systems has significant implications for global societies, particularly in countries with centralized educational systems. These nations can draw lessons from the U.S. experience, where policy analysis has become crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of educational reforms. Centralized systems can benefit from the structured and uniform implementation of policies, but it is essential to critically analyze these policies to ensure they meet intended macro-level goals and are applicable for local level implementation. Policy analysis enables educational authorities to assess the impact of mandates on school accountability systems and student outcomes. By conducting rigorous research and evaluation, centralized systems can identify best practices and areas for improvement, ensuring that reforms lead to tangible benefits for students and are reflective of the unique needs of LEA’s. This approach ensures that educational policies are well-intentioned and effective in practice, fostering an informed, innovative, and capable global society.

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DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT FOR ACCELERATING THE UNITED NATIONS 2030 AND THE AFRICAN UNION 2063 AGENDAS IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This article explores effective diversity management strategies in education, emphasizing their alignment with the United Nations 2030 and African Union 2063 Agendas. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how diversity management enriches educational practices and supports the broader goals of equity and social cohesion. The paper identifies ten key themes: inclusive curriculum development, culturally responsive teaching, teacher training and professional development, student engagement and participation, community partnerships, policy and institutional frameworks, leadership commitment, data collection and analysis, creating safe and inclusive spaces, and technology and digital inclusion. The study highlights the importance of an inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse backgrounds and promotes student engagement. Culturally responsive teaching enhances academic success while fostering equity. Professional development for educators is deemed essential for addressing diverse student needs and fostering inclusive environments. Additionally, engaging students in decision-making processes and building community partnerships are identified as vital for promoting inclusivity. The article underscores the necessity of comprehensive policies and strong leadership commitment to institutionalize diversity management. Data-driven decision-making is emphasized as crucial for identifying gaps and measuring the impact of diversity initiatives. Lastly, the integration of technology is discussed as a means to enhance accessibility and collaboration among students. The findings of this review inform future research and policy development in the field of diversity management in education.

BACKGROUND

Diversity management in education is a critical component for achieving the ambitious global agendas set forth by the United Nations (UN) 2030 and the African Union (AU) 2063 agendas (Froehlich et al., 2021). As societies become increasingly diverse, it is essential to recognize and embrace the unique perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences that students of all genders and ethnicities bring to the educational landscape (Assefa, 2024; Adamu, 2023). By promoting diversity management in education, we can create inclusive learning environments that foster equity, social cohesion, and sustainable development (SD) (Cerna, et al., 2021).

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the AU's Agenda 2063 represent pivotal frameworks for global and continental progress (Chaleta et al., 2021). Both initiatives aim to eradicate poverty, promote sustainable development, and enhance peace and security (Froehlich et al., 2021). The 2030 Agenda emphasizes universal goals that address social, economic, and environmental challenges, while Agenda 2063 focuses on Africa's unique context and aspirations for unity and transformation (Nwebo, 2018). Together, these agendas foster collaboration among nations and regions, aligning efforts to achieve a more equitable and sustainable future (Dodds, et al., 2016). Their interconnectedness highlights the importance of global partnerships in addressing pressing issues and realizing shared ambitions.

Diversity management involves creating an inclusive environment that values differences such as race, gender, and cultural background (Mujtaba, 2024), which is essential for advancing the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas (Šilenskytė, 2022). By fostering diversity management, organizations can enhance creativity and problem-solving, ensuring that marginalized voices are heard and their needs addressed (Milem, 2003). This approach promotes social equity and inclusion, thereby empowering diverse stakeholders to collaborate effectively (Njie, 2019). Ultimately, leveraging diverse perspectives helps develop more effective strategies for sustainable development, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 (Chaleta et al., 2021).

In today's interconnected and multicultural world, educational institutions face the challenge of addressing the diverse needs and backgrounds of their students (Adamu, 2014). Educational systems must adapt to accommodate individuals from various ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds (Mujtaba, 2023). However, many educational institutions struggle to effectively manage and leverage this diversity, resulting in inequalities in access, learning outcomes, and social integration (Alemayehu, 2022). This calls for a deeper understanding of diversity management in education and its potential to address these challenges.

The UN 2030 Agenda, adopted by world leaders in 2015, serves as a blueprint for transforming our world by tackling pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change (Dodds et al., 2016). Central to this agenda are the SDGs, which provide a comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable development (SD) across economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Leal et al., 2018). Within the SDGs, several goals directly intersect with education, including SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (Chaleta et al., 2021). Diversity management plays a pivotal role in advancing these goals by ensuring equitable access to quality education, promoting gender equality in educational settings, and reducing disparities among diverse student populations (Assefa, & Adamu, 2024).

For instance, diversity management in education contributes to SDG 4 by fostering inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse learning needs and styles of students (Šilenskytė, 2022). By embracing diversity and providing culturally responsive teaching practices, educational institutions can enhance the quality of education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Eden et al., 2024). Furthermore, diversity management is instrumental in achieving SDG 5 by challenging gender stereotypes, promoting female empowerment in education, and creating safe and inclusive spaces that enable girls and women to thrive academically (Asaduzzaman, & Ud-Daula, 2021). Additionally, diversity management addresses SDG 10 by reducing inequalities in education through targeted interventions that support marginalized and disadvantaged student populations, ensuring that no one is left behind (Salmi, & D'Addio, 2021).

Likewise, the AU 2063 Agenda envisions a prosperous, integrated, and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena (Nwebo, 2018). Education and skills development are central pillars of this agenda, recognizing the transformative power of education to drive economic growth, social progress, and human development (Hujo & Carter, 2019). Diversity management in education aligns with the AU 2063 Agenda by emphasizing the importance of inclusive education systems that value and celebrate Africa's rich cultural heritage, languages, and diverse identities (Njie, 2019). It acknowledges the need to address inequalities and promote social cohesion through educational practices that empower individuals and contribute to the continent's SD (Dugarova, 2015). Embracing diversity management in education is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic imperative for building inclusive societies and preparing individuals for the challenges of an interconnected world (Pless & Maak, 2004).

By recognizing and valuing the diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of students, educational institutions can create inclusive learning environments that foster critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural understanding (Lee et al., 2012). Moreover, diversity management in education empowers individuals to become active global citizens who are equipped to navigate and contribute to a complex and rapidly changing world (Williams, 2013).

The existing literature on diversity management in education highlights various strategies and outcomes but lacks research specifically focused on how diversity management can accelerate the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas. No author has directly examined the relationship between effective diversity management practices and the advancement of these global and continental frameworks within educational contexts. This gap is critical, as understanding how to leverage diversity in education is key to achieving inclusive and equitable learning environments. Addressing this void will provide valuable insights into how diversity management can contribute to realizing the goals set forth in these important agendas.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the effective strategies for implementing diversity management in education, and how, if at all, can they align with the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas?

OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

The objective of this article is to identify and analyze effective strategies for implementing diversity management in educational settings, with a focus on understanding how these strategies can align with and support the goals of the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas. Additionally, the article aims to explore the potential impact of these strategies on fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments, thereby contributing to broader social and economic development objectives. Through this examination, the article seeks to fill the existing gap in the literature and provide actionable insights for policymakers and educators.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for diversity management in educational settings integrates several key perspectives that align with the UN 2030 Agenda for SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063.

First, social justice theory serves as a foundational lens for examining diversity management. This theory, rooted in principles of fairness, equity, and inclusivity, emphasizes the importance of addressing social, economic, and educational inequalities among diverse student populations (Bell, 2016). It calls for educational institutions to implement policies and practices that promote equitable access to quality education, ensuring fair treatment and reducing disparities (Sabbagh & Schmitt, 2016). By adopting diversity management, educational stakeholders contribute to creating inclusive learning environments that foster social justice, thereby aligning with the UN's commitment to quality education (Goal 4) and the AU's vision for equitable educational access by 2063 (Bogotch, 2000).

Second, the framework includes cultural responsiveness, drawing on cultural-historical and sociocultural theories of learning (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2020). These perspectives highlight the significance of cultural background, identity, and social context in shaping learning experiences (Theoharis, 2007). Cultural responsiveness in education means recognizing and valuing students' diverse backgrounds, which directly supports the UN's agenda for inclusive and equitable quality education (Barry,1989). By adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse learners, educational institutions not only honor diversity but also promote a sense of belonging, which is essential for achieving the AU's goals of unity and cultural integration (Rizvi, 2002).

Furthermore, transformative learning theory plays a crucial role in this framework, which is why many organizations provide training workshops to deal with the root causes of human behavior (Wesley et al., 2024; Roberts and Mujtaba, 2024; Alvarado and Mujtaba, 2023; Alexander et al., 2015; Morais et al., 2014). This theory posits that education can transform individuals' perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors (Mezirow, 2018). By facilitating transformative learning experiences, diversity management challenges stereotypes and fosters critical thinking and intercultural understanding (Walton et al., 2013). Exposing students to diverse perspectives broadens their worldviews, cultivates empathy, and encourages a commitment to social justice and equality, in line with the UN's aims of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16) and the AU's vision for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth (Goodman, 2011; Pless, & Maak, 2004).

Moreover, the framework incorporates the concept of sustainable development, influenced by ecological systems theory and the capabilities approach (Gallopin et al., 1989). SD acknowledges the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental factors, and thus promoting long-term well-being for current and future generations (Flint & Flint, 2013). Within this context, diversity management in education advances sustainable development goals by promoting equitable access to quality education and empowering marginalized groups (Ferrer-Estévez & Chalmeta, 2021). This directly supports the UN's SDGs, particularly Goal 4, and the AU's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes the need for SD and social cohesion (Cerna, et al., 2021).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the framework provides a comprehensive lens for understanding diversity management in education and its alignment with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the AU 2063 Agenda. It underscores the importance of social justice, cultural responsiveness, transformative learning, and SD in shaping inclusive educational practices. This approach enables a deeper analysis of how diversity management can enhance learning outcomes, promote social cohesion, and reduce inequalities, ultimately contributing to the realization of global and continental agendas.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a rigorous and systematic approach to identify, analyze, and synthesize relevant scholarly literature on the topic of diversity management in education and its connection to the UN 2030 Agenda and the AU 2063 Agenda. The following detailed methodology outlines the steps taken in conducting the literature review:

Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was developed to identify relevant literature. Academic databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and academic libraries, were used to conduct a systematic search. The search strategy included a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary related to diversity management, education, UN 2030 Agenda, and AU 2063 Agenda. The search was conducted iteratively, with the initial search yielding a broad set of articles, and subsequent refined searches focusing on specific aspects of the research question.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to select relevant literature for the review. The criteria were developed based on the research question and the objectives of the article. The inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, and policy documents that discussed diversity management in the context of education and its connection to the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas. This review includes a substantial number of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, books chapters, and policy documents, all published within the last twenty years to ensure the literature is current. The geographical focus of the selected literature spans the globe, providing a comprehensive perspective on diversity management practices. The literature encompasses both theoretical developments and empirical studies, with a significant proportion dedicated to theoretical frameworks and others providing data-driven insights. The criteria were consistently applied throughout the screening process to maintain the relevance and quality of the literature included in this review.

Screening and Selection

The identified literature was screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Initially, titles and abstracts were reviewed to determine their relevance to the research question. Selected articles were then obtained in full-text form for further analysis. The screening process was conducted independently by multiple reviewers to ensure consistency and minimize bias. Any discrepancies in the screening process were resolved through discussion and consensus among the reviewers.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction involved systematically extracting relevant information from the selected articles. A data extraction form was developed to capture key details such as author names, publication year, research methodologies, theoretical frameworks, key concepts, findings, and implications related to diversity management in education and its alignment with the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas. The extracted data were organized and synthesized using a thematic analysis approach. Common themes, patterns, and trends across the literature were identified and analyzed to gain insights into the topic. Thematic analysis was conducted to extract key themes from the selected papers, emphasizing recurring concepts related to diversity management. To ensure the trustworthiness of these themes, the researchers cross-referenced them with existing educational policies and frameworks and sought feedback from colleagues. This structured approach is aimed to guarantee that both the corpus and the identified themes are robust and pertinent to advancing the UN and AU agendas in education.

Critical Evaluation

The selected literature was critically evaluated to assess the quality, credibility, and rigor of the studies. This involved examining the research design, methodology, data sources, sample size, limitations, and theoretical underpinnings of each study. The strengths and weaknesses of the literature were considered and discussed in the review. The critical evaluation helped establish the level of evidence provided by the studies and informed the interpretation of the findings.

Synthesis and Interpretation

The synthesized information was then analyzed and interpreted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Connections between diversity management, the UN 2030 Agenda, and the AU 2063 Agenda were identified and discussed. The review presented theoretical frameworks, key findings, and examples from the literature to support the analysis.

The synthesis and interpretation aimed to provide a coherent and well-rounded overview of the current state of knowledge on diversity management in education and its implications for the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas.

By following this systematic and detailed methodology, the researchers aimed to provide a robust and comprehensive analysis of diversity management in education within the context of the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas. The methodology ensured transparency, rigor, and reliability in the process of selecting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant literature, ultimately contributing to a well-informed and evidence-based review.

FINDINGS

This section outlines effective strategies for implementing diversity management in education and evaluates their alignment with the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas. By addressing the question, "What are effective strategies for implementing diversity management in education, and how, if at all, can they align with the United Nations 2030 and African Union 2063 Agendas?", the findings presented here enhance our understanding of the role of diversity management in education. Furthermore, they offer practical insights for policymakers and educators who aim to advance these global agendas.

The implementation of diversity management in educational institutions is crucial for creating inclusive environments that cater to diverse student needs (Loreman, et al., 2005). This section presents literature review findings organized by ten key themes, highlighting effective strategies for diversity management and their alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda and the AU 2063 Agenda. Each theme elaborates on specific strategies, their implications, and supporting evidence.

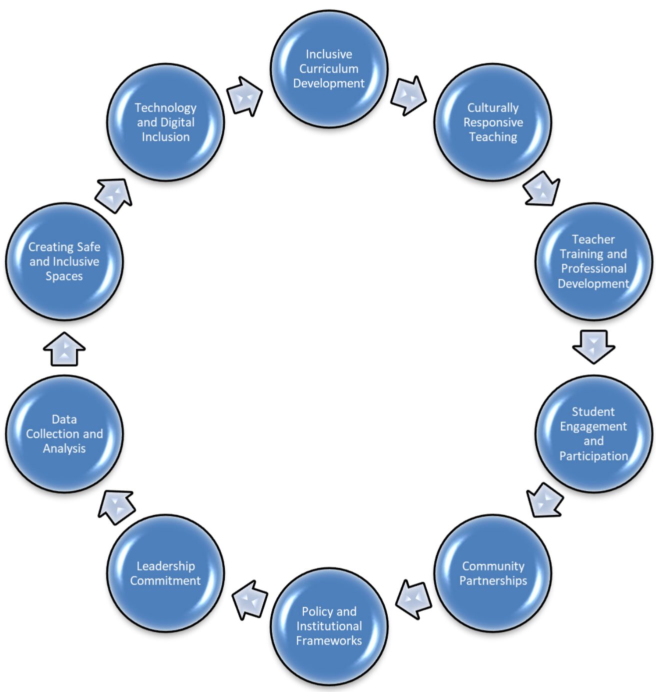

Figure 1 – Diversity Management Themes

Theme 1: Inclusive Curriculum Development

Developing an inclusive curriculum that reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students is fundamental to diversity management (Landsman & Lewis, 2023). An inclusive curriculum goes beyond merely adding multicultural content; it requires a comprehensive approach to ensure that all students see themselves represented in the material they study (Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014). This can involve integrating diverse authors, historical perspectives, and cultural narratives across subjects, enabling students to engage more deeply with the content.

Research indicates that when students encounter diverse perspectives in their studies, their engagement and motivation increase significantly (Reeve, 2012; Mujtaba, 2024). For instance, schools that implement multicultural literature not only enrich the learning environment but also foster critical thinking skills as students analyze various viewpoints (Aydin, 2013). This approach aligns with the UN SDG 4, which emphasizes the need for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. By ensuring that curricula are reflective of diverse experiences, educational institutions can promote a sense of belonging and community among all students (Masika & Jones, 2016).

Theme 2: Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is another vital strategy for implementing diversity management in education (Johnson, 2003). This pedagogical approach involves recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds while adapting teaching methods to meet their diverse needs. Educators can employ strategies such as differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and culturally relevant examples that resonate with students' experiences (Ford & Kea, 2009).

When teachers use culturally responsive techniques, they create an engaging learning environment that fosters academic success and personal growth (Hollie, 2017). Research shows that students are more likely to excel academically when they see their cultures and experiences reflected in the teaching materials and methods (Howard & Terry, 2011; Mujtaba & Mujtaba, 2004). This approach not only enhances student engagement but also promotes educational equity, which is a core component of the AU's Agenda 2063 aspiration for an educated and skilled population. By embracing culturally responsive teaching, educators can help bridge gaps in understanding and foster an inclusive classroom atmosphere (Kumar et al., 2018).

Theme 3: Teacher Training and Professional Development

Effective diversity management begins with well-trained educators. Professional development programs focused on cultural competence and diversity awareness are essential for equipping teachers with the skills necessary to address the diverse needs of their students (Kruse et al., 2018). These programs should cover topics such as implicit bias, inclusive teaching strategies, and the importance of fostering an inclusive classroom environment (Eden et al., 2024).

Ongoing professional development ensures that educators remain informed about emerging diversity issues and effective practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Research indicates that teachers who participate in such training demonstrate greater empathy and understanding towards students from different backgrounds, leading to more equitable treatment in the classroom (Warren, 2018). This aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda's commitment to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all educators. By investing in teacher training, educational institutions can create a foundation for inclusivity that benefits both educators and students alike (Bovill et al., 2016).

Theme 4: Student Engagement and Participation

Engaging students in diversity management initiatives is a powerful strategy for promoting inclusivity. By establishing student-led diversity committees, schools can empower students to voice their concerns, share their experiences, and contribute to policy-making processes (Tienda, 2013). This participatory approach not only enhances students' sense of belonging but also cultivates leadership skills and civic engagement (Adamu, 2013; Masika & Jones, 2016).

Research shows that when students are actively involved in shaping their educational environment, they are more likely to feel invested in their school community (Smyth, 2006; Kanaris and Mujtaba, 2024). Programs such as peer mentorship initiatives also foster positive relationships among students from diverse backgrounds, further enhancing social cohesion (Roland, 2008). This strategy aligns with the goals of the UN 2030 & AU 2063 Agendas, both of which emphasize the importance of youth engagement in decision-making processes (Royo et al., 2022). Empowering students through participation helps develop future leaders who are equipped to advocate for inclusive practices in their communities (Johnson, 2014).

Theme 5: Community Partnerships

Building partnerships with local organizations, parents, and cultural groups is vital for effective diversity management in education (Hora & Millar, 2023). Collaborative efforts can provide valuable resources and perspectives that enrich educational practices. Schools can engage with community organizations to host cultural events, workshops, and programs that celebrate diversity and promote understanding among students (James et al., 2007).

Such partnerships create a supportive network that enhances the educational experience for all students. For example, cultural events can provide opportunities for students to learn about different traditions and histories, fostering respect and appreciation for diversity (Gay, 2013). This collaborative approach aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda’s focus on partnerships for sustainable development and the AU’s emphasis on collective action for social progress. By fostering strong community connections, educational institutions can create a more inclusive environment that reflects the diverse society in which they operate (Pless & Maak, 2004).

Theme 6: Policy and Institutional Frameworks

Establishing comprehensive diversity policies is critical for the sustainable implementation of diversity management strategies. Educational institutions should develop well-defined policies that outline goals, responsibilities, and accountability measures related to diversity and inclusion (Köllen, 2021). These policies must be informed by data on student demographics, academic performance, and community needs to ensure they address the specific challenges faced by diverse student populations (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Research indicates that institutions with clear diversity policies are more successful in fostering inclusive environments. Such frameworks provide a roadmap for educators and administrators, guiding their efforts to create equitable educational experiences (Bauman et al., 2005). This aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda’s commitment to quality education and the AU’s Agenda 2063 aspiration for effective governance and accountability. By institutionalizing diversity management, educational institutions can create a foundation for ongoing improvement and adaptation to the needs of their diverse students (Morphew, 2009).

Theme 7: Leadership Commitment

Strong leadership commitment is essential for the successful implementation of diversity management strategies. Educational leaders must actively advocate for diversity initiatives and model inclusive behaviors within their institutions (Williams, 2013). When school leaders prioritize diversity and inclusion, it sets a positive tone for the entire institution, encouraging staff and students to embrace these values (Lumby & Coleman, 2007).

Effective leadership involves not only supporting diversity initiatives but also ensuring that resources are allocated towards training, community engagement, and policy development (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Leaders should also create a culture of accountability, where all members of the institution are responsible for promoting diversity (Pless & Maak, 2004). This commitment aligns with the goals of both the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas, which emphasize the importance of leadership in driving social change and promoting equity (Africa, U. N. D. P. 2017).

Theme 8: Data Collection and Analysis

Collecting and analyzing data on student demographics, academic performance, and community needs is essential for informed decision-making in diversity management (Bauman et al., 2005). Educational institutions should implement robust data collection practices to identify gaps and measure the effectiveness of diversity initiatives (Byrd, 2022). This data-driven approach enables schools to develop targeted strategies that address specific diversity challenges (Mandinach & Honey, 2008).

Research has shown that institutions that utilize data effectively can make informed decisions that lead to improved educational outcomes for diverse student populations (Shen & Cooley, 2008). By regularly assessing the impact of diversity initiatives, educational institutions can refine their strategies and ensure they meet the evolving needs of their students (Milem et al., 2005). This commitment to data-driven decision-making aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda's focus on evidence-based policies and practices (Furtado et al., 2023).

Theme 9: Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Ensuring a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students is fundamental to effective diversity management. Educational institutions must implement anti-bullying policies and provide resources for students facing discrimination or harassment (Schaffner & Buswell, 2004). Creating a supportive atmosphere is essential for students to thrive academically and socially.

In addition to policy implementation, schools should offer mental health support services that address the emotional needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Providing resources for students to discuss their experiences fosters a culture of understanding and empathy (Reinke et al., 2011). This focus on creating safe spaces aligns with the goals of the AU's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes the importance of social cohesion and resilience within communities (Nzaou, 2019).

Theme 10: Technology and Digital Inclusion

Leveraging technology can enhance diversity management by providing accessible resources and learning opportunities for all students. Educational institutions should utilize digital tools to facilitate collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds, allowing for the sharing of varied perspectives and experiences (Tarbutton, 2018).

However, it is equally important to address the digital divide to ensure that all students have equal access to technology and educational tools (Mujtaba, 2024). Providing resources and training for underserved populations promotes digital inclusion and aligns with the UN's commitment to equitable education (Deganis et al., 2021). By integrating technology effectively, educational institutions can create a more inclusive learning environment that supports the diverse needs of their students (Evmenova, 2018).

DISCUSSION

The findings on effective strategies for implementing diversity management in education reveal significant insights but also highlight several blind spots and gaps in the existing literature. Identifying these areas is crucial for guiding future research and informing policies aimed at advancing diversity management, ultimately supporting the educational goals outlined in the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas.

A significant gap in the literature is the scarcity of context-specific studies on diversity management strategies. Many existing works adopt a generalized approach, overlooking the unique cultural, social, and economic factors that influence diversity across different regions. This is particularly relevant in the context of the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas, both of which emphasize the need for localized solutions to educational challenges. Future research should prioritize studies that explore how diversity management can be tailored to meet specific community needs, especially in diverse African contexts where cultural dynamics are complex and multifaceted. Such localized insights could directly contribute to achieving the UN's Goal 4 of inclusive quality education and the AU's vision for equitable access.

Another critical blind spot is the limited exploration of intersectionality within diversity management literature. Current discussions often focus on singular aspects of identity, such as race or gender, without adequately considering how multiple identities such as socio-economic status, disability, and age intersect to shape individual experiences in educational settings. Research that examines these intersections can provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by diverse student populations, aligning with the UN's commitment to reducing inequalities (Goal 10) and the AU's focus on promoting inclusive education for all. Addressing these intersections will lead to more effective diversity management strategies that reflect the realities of students' lives.

The current research landscape also lacks longitudinal studies that track the long-term outcomes of diversity management initiatives in education. While many studies highlight immediate impacts, there is a pressing need for evidence demonstrating how these strategies contribute to sustained improvements in educational equity, student engagement, and academic success over time. Longitudinal research can help educators and policymakers understand the lasting effects of their efforts, which is essential for realizing the UN's goal of promoting lifelong learning opportunities (Goal 4.4) and supporting the AU's agenda for continuous educational improvement.

Additionally, there is a noticeable gap in empirical studies addressing the challenges educational institutions face when implementing diversity management policies. Although existing literature emphasizes the importance of policy frameworks, it often overlooks practical obstacles such as resource limitations, staff resistance, and inadequate training. Research focused on these implementation challenges can provide valuable insights into best practices for overcoming barriers, thereby facilitating the effective enactment of diversity policies. This aligns with the UN's emphasis on strengthening the capacity of educational institutions and the AU's call for strategic partnerships to enhance educational quality.

Moreover, a further blank spot in the literature is the absence of standardized evaluation frameworks for assessing the effectiveness of diversity initiatives in education. While many institutions implement diversity programs, there is little guidance on accurately measuring their impact. Future research should aim to develop comprehensive evaluation tools that enable schools to assess the effectiveness of their diversity management strategies, facilitating continuous improvement and accountability. This need resonates with the UN's focus on data-driven decision-making and the AU's emphasis on evidence-based policies.

As educational technology continues to evolve, its role in supporting diversity management remains underexplored. Although technology offers opportunities for enhancing inclusivity through online learning platforms and digital collaboration tools, research examining how technology can be effectively leveraged to promote diversity and inclusion is limited. Future studies should investigate best practices for integrating technology into diversity management efforts, particularly in underserved communities, aligning with the UN's goal of promoting access to technology for all learners (Goal 4.4) and the AU's focus on technology as a driver of educational transformation.

The identification of these gaps underscores the necessity for targeted research that informs policy development aimed at advancing effective diversity management in education. Policymakers should consider funding studies that explore diversity management strategies tailored to local contexts, particularly in regions with diverse cultural and socio-economic landscapes. Research initiatives should adopt an intersectional lens to understand the complexities of student identities and experiences, allowing for more comprehensive diversity strategies that align with both the UN and AU agendas. Additionally, longitudinal studies that assess the long-term effectiveness of diversity management initiatives should be prioritized to provide insights into sustained educational outcomes.

Furthermore, resources and training programs must be developed to assist educators in navigating practical challenges in implementing diversity policies, including overcoming resistance and addressing resource constraints. Standardized evaluation frameworks for measuring the impact of diversity initiatives should be created, enabling schools to assess their effectiveness and make data-informed improvements. Lastly, research on the integration of technology in diversity management should be encouraged, exploring how digital tools can enhance inclusivity and support diverse learning needs in line with the goals of both the UN and the AU.

OVERALL IMPLICATIONS

The implications of implementing diversity management strategies in education for accelerating the UN 2030 & the AU 2063 Agendas are far-reaching and have significant implications for educational institutions, policymakers, educators, students, and society.

1. Educational Institutions: Educational institutions must recognize the critical role of diversity management in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. This commitment involves developing inclusive policies, integrating diversity into the curriculum, providing professional development for educators, and fostering collaboration with local communities. By embracing diversity management, institutions can enhance student engagement, academic achievement, and social cohesion, which aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda's Goal 4 for inclusive quality education and the AU's vision of equitable access to education by 2063.

2. Policymakers: Policymakers are essential in promoting and supporting diversity management within education. They possess the authority to enact legislation that ensures equal access to education, facilitates the implementation of inclusive policies, and allocates resources for diversity initiatives. By prioritizing diversity management in education reform agendas and collaborating with educational institutions and communities, policymakers can create an enabling environment for inclusive education. This aligns with the UN's commitment to reducing inequalities (Goal 10) and the AU's goal of fostering educational systems that reflect the diverse needs of their populations.

3. Educators: Educators are at the forefront of implementing diversity management strategies in the classroom. They must develop cultural competency, embrace inclusive teaching practices, and address unconscious biases. By creating a safe and inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued and respected, educators can significantly impact student outcomes. Incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum and promoting critical thinking fosters empathy, understanding, and tolerance, which is vital for achieving the UN's Goal 4 on quality education and the AU's emphasis on nurturing well-rounded, culturally competent citizens.

4. Students: Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of effective diversity management in education. By engaging in an inclusive educational environment, they gain exposure to diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences that foster personal and social development. This preparation is essential for navigating a multicultural world and becoming global citizens. The enhanced cultural competence of educators and the availability of tailored support services address students' unique needs, directly supporting the UN's aim of promoting lifelong learning opportunities (Goal 4.4) and the AU's objective of developing a skilled workforce by 2063.

5. Society: A society that embraces diversity and inclusion in education reaps numerous benefits, including increased social cohesion, reduced discrimination, and a stronger sense of belonging for all individuals. By equipping students with the skills to engage with diverse communities and navigate cultural differences, diversity management in education contributes to social harmony, respect, and understanding. This broader societal impact aligns with the UN's focus on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16) and the AU's vision of a united and integrated Africa, ultimately fostering inclusive and peaceful communities.

IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Educational planning must emphasize the creation of inclusive curricula that accurately represent the diverse backgrounds of students, which aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda's Goal 4 for inclusive and equitable quality education and the AU's Agenda 2063 aspiration for an educated populace. This should be complemented by structured professional development for educators focused on cultural competence, ensuring that teachers are equipped to meet the needs of all learners. Establishing clear diversity policies informed by data is crucial for addressing specific challenges faced by diverse student populations, thereby supporting the UN's commitment to reducing inequalities (Goal 10) and the AU's goal of fostering inclusive education.

Furthermore, implementing student engagement initiatives and community partnerships will enhance cultural awareness and promote a sense of belonging, resonating with both the UN and AU agendas that emphasize the importance of community involvement in education. Robust data collection practices are vital for evaluating the effectiveness of diversity initiatives, enabling informed decision-making and continuous improvement, which aligns with the UN's focus on evidence-based policies. Lastly, ensuring equitable access to technology is essential for creating inclusive learning environments, supporting the UN's goal of promoting access to quality education for all learners. By addressing these areas, educational planning can significantly advance diversity management and promote equitable educational experiences for every student.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlighted the essential role of effective diversity management strategies in education, aligning with the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas. The findings revealed that developing an inclusive curriculum is foundational, allowing students from diverse backgrounds to see themselves represented and engaged in their learning. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also enhances critical thinking and motivation, which ultimately contributes to equitable quality education for all and supporting the objectives of the UN 2030 and AU 2063 Agendas.

Culturally responsive teaching emerged as a vital strategy, fostering an environment where students' cultural identities are recognized and valued. By adapting pedagogical methods to meet diverse needs, educators must create inclusive classrooms that promote academic success and personal growth. This focus aligns with the UN 2030 & AU 2063 Agendas by ensuring that all students receive equitable treatment and support.

Engaging students in diversity-related initiatives through participatory processes, such as student-led committees, empowers them and fosters leadership skills, thereby reinforcing their sense of belonging within the school community. Community partnerships further enhance these initiatives by providing resources and organizing cultural events that celebrated diversity, which not only enriches the educational experience but also aligns with the goals of the UN 2030 & AU 2063 Agendas.

Moreover, the establishment of clear policy and institutional frameworks have proved critical for the sustainable implementation of diversity management strategies. Such policies are informed by data, allowing institutions to address specific challenges and measure the success of diversity initiatives in line with the UN 2030 & AU 2063 Agendas. Strong leadership commitment is equally important; when educational leaders prioritize diversity and inclusion, they set a positive tone throughout the institution, encouraging staff and students to embrace these values.

The commitment to data collection and analysis enables schools to make informed decisions, ensuring that diversity-related initiatives are effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the student population. Creating safe and inclusive environments is paramount, allowing students to thrive academically and socially. Anti-bullying policies and mental health support services serve as essential components of this effort, fostering a culture of understanding and empathy, which resonates with the objectives of the UN 2030 & AU 2063 Agendas.

Finally, leveraging technology to promote digital inclusion present an opportunity to bridge any gaps in access to educational resources between students in different regions, thereby ensuring that all students can benefit from diverse learning opportunities locally, nationally, and globally. By integrating technology thoughtfully, educational institutions enhance collaboration and engagement among students from varied backgrounds, further supporting the aims of the UN 2030 & AU 2063 Agendas.

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TEACHER-RESEARCHER IDENTITY: EXAMINING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the nuanced dimensions of the teacher-researcher identity, focusing on teachers' perceptions of teachers as researchers within the educational landscape. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study aims to uncover the extent to which 198 K-12 teachers working in the field identify teachers as researchers, as well as identify the frequency they believe teachers participate in specific research activities. The findings highlight the necessity of embedding "researcher" as a core element of teachers' professional identity, as well as suggest implications for both educator preparation and broader educational planning, calling for expanded efforts to develop teachers' research competencies and integrate research as a fundamental part of their professional roles. This study not only sheds light on the current state of teacher-researcher identity, but also provides implications for educator preparation programs and broader educational planning to develop pragmatic research competencies in teacher candidates.

INTRODUCTION

Educational research is essential for broadening the scope of facts and perspectives that contribute to the advancement of the field. By exploring different aspects of teaching and learning, educational research fosters deeper understanding and continuous improvement. This process enables educators and stakeholders to critically examine current practices, identify areas for growth, and implement evidence-based strategies that enhance learning outcomes (Bourke & Loveridge, 2017; Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, research serves as a bridge between theory and practice, allowing teachers to apply theoretical frameworks to real-world classroom challenges (Mertler, 2021). In doing so, it supports a reflective and dynamic profession in which teachers continually adapt their approaches to meet the evolving needs of students (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Educational research also plays a pivotal role in influencing policy decisions, shaping curricula, and guiding professional development, ultimately improving the quality of education systems on a broader scale (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). By contributing to both practical applications and policy reforms, educational research ensures that the field remains responsive and effective in addressing the complexities of modern education.

At the classroom level, research empowers teachers to become reflective practitioners who can adapt and improve their teaching strategies based on evidence (Mertler, 2021). When teachers conduct research, they gain deeper insights into student learning, classroom dynamics, and effective pedagogical practices, allowing them to make informed decisions and address challenges more effectively (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). Research also enables teachers to personalize instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Additionally, teacher-researchers contribute to the profession by sharing their findings with colleagues, fostering a collaborative culture of continuous improvement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). When teachers actively share knowledge gained through research, they help build a professional community and shape the minds within that community (McRae & Parsons, 2018). Ultimately, when teachers engage in research, they not only enhance their own practice but also contribute to the broader field of education, helping to shape educational policies and innovations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional Identity of Teachers

Professional identity refers to a practitioners' views on "career goals, social values, and other factors" (Zhu, 2021, p. 124). The development of professional identity is shaped by various factors, including personal experiences, interactions with colleagues, and engagement in ongoing professional development (Beijaard et al., 2004). Zhang, et al. (2024) goes on to allude to the important role that professional identity plays, stating it can "influence an individual's thinking, feelings, and behavior". (p. 124) For those who work in public service (e.g., nurses, teachers, etc.), high expectations can lead to feelings of being overworked and underpaid. Having a positive perception of their identity within their chosen profession can be impactful enough to "overcome their dissatisfaction with poor working conditions," (Zhu, 2021, p. 124), combat burnout and turnover (Liske et al., 2023), and improve the overall quality of work (Liu & Zhang, 2019).

For teachers, the formation of a strong professional identity is linked to both their sense of purpose and job satisfaction, as well as their ability to manage their multiple roles and demands in a classroom (Ambusaidi & Alhosni, 2023; Day et al., 2006). A well-established professional identity enhances teachers' resilience in the face of challenges and promotes a greater commitment to their students and the profession as a whole (Kelchtermans, 2009). Moreover, the process of identity formation is dynamic, evolving throughout a teacher's career as they gain more experience and adapt to changes in the educational landscape (Sachs, 2001). This continuous development of professional identity is crucial for fostering reflective teaching practices, as teachers who are confident in their professional roles are more likely to engage in self-reflection and implement innovative teaching strategies (Ambusaidi & Alhosni, 2023; Van Veen & Sleegers, 2006).

The construction of a teacher's professional identity is complex given their identity "will be in part a projection of the teacher's view of the institutional role of *teacher* and in part a projection of a unique individual identity based on the teacher's autobiography" (Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 7). Clarke (2009) and Reves (2018) outline four key elements to teachers developing their professional identity: substance, authority sources, self-practices, and the endpoint. Substance refers to the core characteristics, values, and beliefs that teachers hold about themselves in relation to their professional roles. This involves their personal convictions about teaching, learning, and the purpose of education. Authority sources are the external influences that shape and inform a teacher's professional identity. These sources can include formal institutions such as policies and standards, as well as informal sources like stakeholder expectations. Self-practices encompass the actions and behaviors that teachers engage in to develop and express their professional identity. This includes the ways in which they reflect on their teaching, adapt to new challenges, and continuously work to improve their craft. Finally, the endpoint is the ultimate goal that teachers have for themselves within their profession. It represents the ideal version of who they want to become as educators.

Research integrates into each of Clarke (2009) and Reves' (2018) key elements of a teacher's professional identity. For example, reading about the experience of others in the field through their published work relates to the "substance" of a teacher's professional identity. Looking to and relying on scholarly experts in the field to guide decisions and legitimize theoretical teaching practices learned during teacher preparation relates to the "authority sources" of a teacher's professional identity. Developing and evolving professionally through knowledge gained from shared qualitative and quantitative research studies done in the field relates to the "self practices" of a teacher's professional identity. Finally, the drive to be a lifelong-learner and continue to meet the needs of all students through innovative experiences and adaptive curriculum relates to the "endpoint" of a teacher's professional identity. Overall, the integration of research into a teacher's professional identity allows educators to not only engage in reflective practice but also to contribute to the evolution of the field, creating a cycle of continuous learning and improvement that benefits both their personal development and the broader educational community.

Teacher-Researcher Identity

Teacher-researcher identity is grounded in the idea that incorporating evidence-based research into teachers' daily practice will enhance the quality of their instruction. This teacher-researcher identity involved teachers taking on the dual roles of educators and inquirers, which fosters reflection, continuous learning, and innovation in teaching (Castelló et al., 2021). There are several existing frameworks and conceptual models that characterize the teacher-researcher identity. This is attributed to the various roles, competencies, and responsibilities that the teacher-researcher encompass within the field of education. The existing frameworks and conceptual models propose several understandings of this identity, yet all agree that teachers who engage in research not only refine their instructional methods but also build a deeper understanding of their practice.

Teachers engaging in action research is one model, sometimes referred to the practitioner inquiry model, involving systematic inquiry conducted by the practitioners to improve their own teaching skills (Alves et al., 2024; Mertler, 2009, 2021). This model begins with the teacher-researcher identifying a problem in their practice, gathering evidence to support this, reflecting on their findings, then drawing conclusions to then apply in practice (Mertler, 2009). While the action research model benefits individual classroom practice mainly, it emphasizes an active role the teacher-researcher plays in the classroom given their involvement in their class and integration of research in their practice. Alves et al. (2024) stated that "engagement with research, … , provides lifelong tools for teachers to identify and remove barriers to ensuring that all learners can access, participate, and succeed in education" (p.10). This knowledge strengthens teachers' practices as well as identifies barriers in the field of education to ensure they meet the needs of their students. Mohamed (2024) suggests that action research in education assists in identifying practical classroom challenges. This is the type of research and application of findings that will directly benefit the teacher and students. On top of the direct benefits to their instructional practices, it also empowers them to make informed decisions and increases teachers' confidence (Mohamed, 2024). This model is empowering for teachers and beneficial for all parties which makes it a highly desirable endeavor. Through the process of action research, teachers better themselves and their students.

The reflective practitioner model proposed by Schön (1983) emphasizes the importance of reflection in practice. This framework suggests that effective practitioners, in this case teachers, continuously conduct research by reflecting on their experiences and actions to improve their instructional practice. According to Ranglund et al. (2023), Schön promoted two types of reflection, in action and on action. Reflection in action involves active reflection while teaching or in the classroom, whereas reflection on action is performed retrospectively to analyze the situation and its implications for the future (Ranglund et al., 2023). By conducting systematic and reflective evaluation of instruction, teachers can identify more effective practices which will encourage teachers to experiment with new concepts or instructional methods (Ilisko et al., 2010). Professional learning communities (PLCs), commonplace in education, also offer an arena for teachers to reflect on practice, sharing their knowledge and experiences, resources, and support their fellow peers (O'Connor & Park, 2023). O'Connor and Park (2023) also suggest that teachers should constantly be evaluating data in PLCs. By employing research skills such as data collection, analysis, and interpretation, teachers can reflect upon daily practice providing insight into their own growth as well as student learning outcomes. This information can then be used to improve their teaching, which will in turn improve student learning. If teachers do not reflect on their experiences and outcomes some improvement opportunities are missed.

A similarity amongst the frameworks is the duality of a teacher's role, being both a practitioner and researcher in the classroom. Whether it is through acting as a reflective practitioner, conducting action research, practitioner inquiry or professional learning communities, teachers are consistently engaging in the actions of reflection, inquiry and collaboration with their colleagues and students. This is all conducted with the goals of improving teaching practices which in turn improves student learning outcomes. As Ilisko et al. (2010) indicate, "the positive effects of conducting research in the classroom are tremendous: teachers build their own theory of teaching; they act as curriculum designers and make informed decisions in their classrooms" (p. 53). In both frameworks, teachers are actively engaging in their own professional development and strengthening their teacher-researcher identity.

Benefits and Challenges

Research-informed teaching is linked to improved student learning outcomes, specifically for students with diverse needs (Lu & Zhang, 2023). Teachers who incorporate evidence-based practices are more likely to create engaging and effective learning environments that positively impact student achievement as they stay on top of new findings and instructional methods. Teacher-led research is a powerful tool for enhancing teachers' practices and strengthening students' educational experiences (Mohamed, 2024). This reflection and evaluation of classroom processes and student experiences inspire mutually beneficial, collaborative changes amongst the students and their teacher. As teachers conduct their own research, they are not only examining their teaching methodologies, but the unique student population and assessment measures in place (Mohamed, 2024). These are important considerations as research and theories are constantly evolving in the areas of culturally responsive classroom management and various assessment methods that suit different needs (Mertler, 2021). Taking all of these into account in their teaching strengthens the quality and effectiveness of their pedagogical practices. Teacher initiated research can aid in classroom practices, giving teachers the capacity to make professional judgements (Ilisko et al., 2010). This new confidence derived from their research in their judgment empowers new and experienced teachers in their practice. Mohamed (2024) identified a significant conclusion that action research improves teachers' problem-solving skills, reflective practice and boosts their self-confidence. These are essential qualities for teachers to strengthen and gradually leads to higher job satisfaction as teachers grow with their roles.

Research is only one of many important factors within the classroom that teachers need to focus their attention upon (Danijela, 2018). Factors such as classroom management and behavioral issues, lesson planning and other school commitments can all prevent a teacher from conducting research. However, time and resources are the leading factors preventing teachers from conducting research (Craig et al., 2023; Teig et al., 2019). The global teacher shortage placed more barriers to research with more demands from teachers on their daily jobs. Teachers are expected to teach more without a pay increase; specifically in the United States, teachers are teaching 200 more contracted hours per year (compared to teachers around the world), and receive lower salaries than graduates with similar degrees (Craig et al., 2023). Teachers lack the ability to allocate time toward research with increased workloads due to the shortage of trained substitute teachers and reduced school funding (Craig et al., 2023). Overall, the current job demands of teachers do not allow for allocation of time and resources towards research, despite the aforementioned benefits.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research was to better understand the teacher-researcher identity in an effort to pragmatically develop this identity within Educator Preparation Programs (EPP). This study gathered quantitative and qualitative data through a web-based survey designed to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent, if any, do K-12 teachers perceive teachers as researchers?
2. Why do teachers perform or not perform research?
3. Which research competencies do K-12 teachers perform and how often are they engaging in these competencies?

METHODS

Research Design

The study utilized a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions of themselves as researchers and their engagement in research competencies. The quantitative component involved the collection of data through Likert scale survey questions to quantify the extent teachers are researchers and the frequency they participate in specific research activities. Meanwhile, the qualitative component added depth to the findings by incorporating an open-ended response to provide context and elaboration on the Likert scale responses. The integration of both methods allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of the data, enhancing the overall validity of the study's conclusions.

Sample of Participants

Convenience and snowball sampling were used to identify a population of K-12 teachers currently working in the field. Convenience sampling was used to identify teacher candidates enrolled from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024 within an EPP at an independent liberal arts university in the American Northeast. Within this population, teacher candidates completing field experience within a K-12 school were identified. Given the university's proximity to the border and international student population, this included teacher candidates located both in the United States as well as Ontario, Canada. Through snowball sampling, the identified teacher candidates were asked to forward the survey to current K-12 teachers within their own networks, including those they were working with through their field experience, as well as those within their personal networks. After cleaning the data to remove incomplete surveys and participants who were not currently working in the field of education, a sample of 198 teachers was included in the study.

Research Instrument

Participants were asked to complete a survey that was designed to measure the extent teachers perceive educators as researchers and engage in research competencies. The survey included one Likert scale question designed to collect overall perceptions related to how often teachers do research, one open-ended question to provide a brief explanation of the first answer, and then 23 follow-up Likert scale questions designed to collect perceptions related to how often teachers perform specific research competencies (see Appendix). The 23 items were developed based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature (Mertler, 2009, 2021) and initial items were reviewed by a panel of three experts that taught graduate research education courses to ensure content validity. The experts assessed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Demographics were also collected for analysis related to teacher gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, years of experience, current position, and grade level taught. Additionally, school type and location (i.e., city and state) data were collected.

Data Analysis

Frequency distributions were developed and analyzed using Likert scale responses from the survey and reported out in a visual manner (i.e., bar and stacked-bar charts). This quantitative data were compared to the qualitative data gathered through the one open-ended question soliciting an explanation to participants' overall perception of how often teachers do research. Data were analyzed using in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013). Specifically, this involved the development of themes in the form of short phrases or words from participants' own language.

RESULTS

Demographics of Participants

Of the 198 participants, the sample included primarily white (87.4%) females (82.8%) ranging from 20 to 69 years old, with the majority under the age of 40 (59.6%) (see Table 1). The participants included teachers teaching in Canada (74.2%) and the United States (25.8%) who were primarily full-time (74.7%), public school (84.3%) teachers with more than one year of experience in the field of education (94.4%), suggesting answers stem from a strong foundation of experience in the field. Participants included a diverse sample of teachers from various grade levels, with the majority teaching elementary grades (61.1%).

Table 1

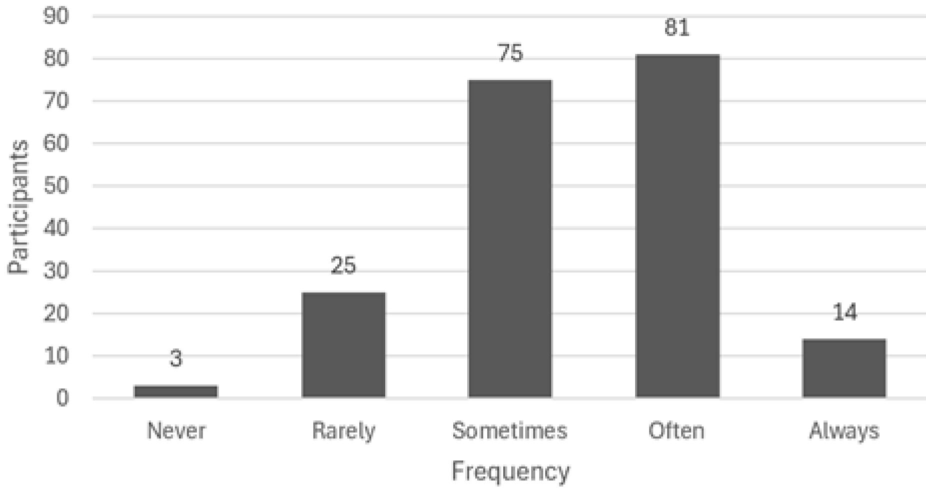
Demographics of Participants

	n	%		n	%
Gender			**Ethnicity**		
Male	32	16.2	Black or African American	5	2.5
Female	164	82.8	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.5
Non-binary/other gender	2	1.0	Asian	5	2.5
Age			Latino	4	2.0
20-29	59	29.8	Multiple Ethnicity/Other	10	5.1
30-39	59	29.8	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
40-49	48	24.3	White	173	87.4
50-59	27	13.6	**Years Experience**		
60-69	5	2.5	Less than 1 year	11	5.6
Highest Level of Education			1-5 years	58	29.3
Bachelor's degree	131	66.2	6-10 years	37	18.7
Master's degree	58	29.3	11-15 years	27	13.6
Professional degree	6	3.0	16-20 years	27	13.6
Doctorate degree	3	1.5	More than 20 years	38	19.2
Position			**Current Grade Taught**		
Full-time Teacher	148	74.7	Elementary (PreK-6)	121	61.1
Part-time Teacher	11	5.6	Secondary (7-12)	52	26.3
Substitute Teacher	18	9.1	Other	25	12.6
Teacher's Aide	2	1.0	**Type of School**		
Other	19	9.6	Public	167	84.3
Country			Private	20	10.1
Canada	147	74.2	Other (all grades, college, etc.)	11	5.6
United States	51	25.8			

Teacher Perceptions

Understanding the frequency of teachers’ research can help identify their level of engagement with current educational trends, highlight areas where additional support or resources may be needed, and contribute to creating a culture of continuous improvement and evidence-based teaching practices within schools. Participants were asked how often they believe teachers conduct research (see Figure 1). Results indicated that the majority of participants believe teachers Sometimes (37.9%) or Often (40.9%) conduct research. In contrast, 14.1% of participants indicated they believe teachers Rarely or Never conduct research, while 7.1% of participants indicated they believe teachers Always conduct research. These findings suggest research is a common activity among practicing teachers.

Figure 1
Participants' Beliefs of How Often Teachers Conduct Research



Participants were also asked to briefly explain why they believed teachers Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never conducted research (see Table 2). While being coded in groups related to frequency, the themes were also categorized as positive or negative based on the way they were worded by participants. The themes are listed in order of priority, with the more prevalent themes being listed first. Table 2 highlights how as the frequency participants believe teachers conduct research decreases from Always to Never, the comments shift in theme from positive to negative. For example, those who indicated they believe teachers Always or Often conduct research phrased their comments in a positive manner, focusing on staying current and a commitment to continuous improvement through research directed towards best practices, student needs, and professional "growth". On the contrary, those who indicated they believe teachers Never conduct research phrased their comments in a negative manner, focusing on a lack of time to do research, research not being part of the job, and research only being conducted to address a professional "deficit".

Those who indicated they believe teachers sometimes conduct research expressed positive notions related to curriculum, student needs, and professional development, but added there were time constraints related to the ability to conduct research and "reactive" research related to issues rather than purposeful research related to goals. These negative themes came up again by those who indicated they believe teachers rarely conduct research, as they described research as a task hard to fit into a teacher's busy schedule, external pressure to conduct research, resource constraints, and an overall lack of administrative support. Throughout all responses, there was a theme of informal research. It is clear that the research being done in the field is not always formal; teachers believe it applies to a small group, cannot be generalized, is not scientific, and is used for immediate feedback.

After participants indicated and discussed the overall frequency they believed teachers conduct research, they were asked to indicate how often teachers perform *specific* research related activities, such as synthesizing information, collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data, communicating findings, etc. (see Figure 2). Participants indicated varying degrees of engagement across different research-related activities. A significant proportion of teachers reported that they

Always adhere to ethical standards (63.4%) and frequently gather resources (40.6%). However, only a small fraction of participants indicated that they Always make a hypothesis (9.9%) or collect evidence towards a hypothesis (17.3%), suggesting that formulating hypotheses may not be a common practice among educators.

Table 2

Why Participants Believe Teachers Never-Always Conduct Research

Frequency	Positive Themes	Negative Themes
Always	Staying Current	
	Research for Best Practices	
	Continuous Learning	
	Professional Growth	
	Action/Informal Research	
	Commitment to Student Needs	
Often	Curriculum Development	Employment Requirement
	Subject-Specific Research	
	Informal/Self-Directed Research	
	Adapting to Changing Needs	
	Data-Driven Decision Making	
Sometimes	Informal Research	Time Constraints
	Professional Development-Driven	Reactive Research
	Differentiation Based on Teacher Interest	
	Research for Student-Specific Needs	
Rarely	Focus on Immediate Classroom Needs	Lack of Time/Resources
		Formal Research Not Expected
		External Pressures
		Lack of Institutional Support
Never		Needed for Career Advancement
		Research Not Part of the Job
		No Time or Motivation
		Professional Development Deficit

In terms of practical problem-solving, 28.7% of teachers reported that they Always seek practical solutions to issues, while an even higher percentage of teachers Often analyze data (34.2%). Meanwhile, nearly 35.2% of teachers indicated that they Always solve issues based on the research process. Moreover, while a considerable number of participants Always engage in data collection (37.1%) and organizing data (38.1%), there is a significant number who only Sometimes engage in activities like making data-informed decisions (21.3%), interpreting data (31.7%), and synthesizing information (20.8%). Furthermore, 28.2% of participants Always use the results to impact future practices, indicating a strong tendency towards applying research findings to practical classroom scenarios. Lastly, while 25.7% of participants reported that they Always act as agents of change, there is still room for growth in terms of translating research into broader systemic changes within educational settings.

Overall, the data reflect a broad spectrum of engagement with research processes, with more emphasis placed on ethical adherence and resource gathering than on hypothesis formation and theoretical exploration. Formal research often requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure safety of human subjects; it follows that teachers would adhere to a similar high level of ethical standards when collecting data, analyzing, interpreting, and sharing educational data from vulnerable populations every day.

Figure 2

Participants' Beliefs of How Often Teachers Perform Specific Research Related Activities

CONCLUSION

The findings support the need for "researcher" to be integrated into teachers' professional identity, as well as the overall importance of the teacher-researcher identity identified in the literature (Alves et al., 2024; Ilisko et al., 2010; Mertler, 2009, 2021; O'Connor & Park, 2023; Ranglund et al., 2023; Schön, 1983). Implications for both educator preparation and broader educational planning are supported by findings that suggest efforts needed to expand teachers' focus on research competencies. By providing teachers with the skills, resources, and opportunities to engage fully in research—beyond simply addressing immediate classroom concerns—both new and experienced educators can contribute to the profession's ongoing development. This will help cultivate a research-driven culture in education, where inquiry and evidence-based practices are central to both day-to-day teaching and long-term planning and reform.

Professional Identity

The findings regarding how often they believe teachers conduct research confirm that, although many teachers engage in research-like activities, not all teachers are identified as researchers. As outlined by Clarke (2009), building a stronger professional identity incorporating research requires both internal and external support; educators must see the value in formal research processes, and educational systems must recognize and incentivize these efforts. The findings demonstrate that external support, identified as a barrier to research in the literature (Craig et al., 2023; Teig et al., 2019) continues to be identified as a barrier by teachers in the field. Encouraging teachers to view research as a core part of their professional identity, rather than an optional or peripheral activity, can foster a deeper sense of agency and innovation (i.e., providing internal support). By allocating time and resources to self-reflection, collaborative inquiry, and knowledge dissemination, administration can increasingly assist educators in seeing themselves as contributors to a larger body of educational knowledge, thus transforming both their practice and the broader educational landscape (i.e., external support).

Findings also suggest that many teachers engage in research related activities, suggesting that "researcher" should be part of their professional identity (despite not being identified by all). Given engagement in research related activities will support their professional growth (Ilisko et al., 2010; Mohamed, 2024), it follows that building a professional identity that includes "researcher" is important. This can be done in the field through encouraging research as part of professional development for educators. Instead of solely relying on traditional professional development courses, teachers can conduct research to adopt a constructivist approach to learning, constructing their own knowledge through findings relevant to their specific teaching context. Ultimately, the findings suggest that teachers are already engaging in the pragmatic research activities that are likely to contribute to meaningful and sustainable changes in their teaching practice; the ability for them to identify this as part of their professional identity may allow them to better harness the power of research identified in the literature.

Educator Preparation and Educational Planning

The findings suggest important implications for both educator preparation and broader educational planning, particularly in terms of how research is viewed and integrated into teaching practices. While the data indicate that teachers frequently engage in practical aspects of research, such as gathering resources, adhering to ethical standards, and solving classroom issues, there is less focus on foundational research tasks like hypothesis formation and formal data analysis. This suggests that many educators view research as a tool for addressing immediate classroom needs rather than as a structured, ongoing process aimed at generating new knowledge or advancing the profession.

For EPPs, this underscores the importance of integrating action research into courses and practical experiences to equip future teachers with the skills necessary for pragmatic, real-world problem-solving. Action research, which involves identifying issues, implementing solutions, and reflecting on outcomes in a cyclical process, allows teachers to directly apply research to their practice. Courses and practical experiences should emphasize the importance of developing hypotheses, exploring theoretical frameworks, and interpreting data, skills that are currently less utilized according to the findings. Integrating these components into teacher preparation in ways that are immediately relevant to the classroom context could help bridge the gap between theory and practice, empowering educators to approach teaching with a research-oriented mindset from the outset of their careers. By focusing on action research, teacher candidates can cultivate a research-oriented mindset that is both practical and responsive to the dynamic needs of students. Additionally, preparing teachers to reflect on their findings and share research outcomes with colleagues foster a collaborative and improvement-focused teaching culture, which can enhance professional growth and student outcomes. Through this approach, future educators will be better positioned to engage in continuous inquiry, ensuring that their teaching is informed by both data and reflective practice.

From the perspective of broader educational planning, the findings reveal opportunities for schools, districts, and policy makers to support teachers in engaging more fully with research. While many educators are solving problems and acting as agents of change, fewer are consistently writing reports or sharing their findings. Educational planners could create structures to support these activities, such as professional learning communities, dedicated research time, and incentives for publishing or presenting research. Offering professional development focused on data analysis, synthesizing information, and report writing would also encourage a more systematic approach to research, ultimately enriching the knowledge base of the profession. Moreover, the finding that a significant portion of teachers frequently solve issues and act as agents of change suggests that there is potential to further capitalize on teachers' interest in research as a tool for innovation. By addressing common barriers, such as time constraints and lack of resources, educational planning at the system level can empower educators to engage more deeply with research. This could include reallocating responsibilities, offering research grants for teachers, or creating collaborative research networks where educators can work together to address broader educational challenges. In this way, research would not only serve the needs of individual classrooms but also contribute to shaping curriculum, policy, and broader educational reforms.

LIMITATIONS

While the findings provide valuable insights into teachers' engagement with research and its implications for educator preparation, there are several limitations to consider. First, the data primarily reflect the perceptions and self-reported behaviors of educators, which may not fully capture actual research practices or the diversity of experiences across different educational contexts. The sample size, although strong and representative of the field (Gist & Bristol, 2022), has varied representation that may also limit the generalizability of the findings, particularly for certain underrepresented demographics (i.e., male, BIPOC, secondary, and private school teachers). Additionally, the survey questions may not have fully explored the nuances of how teachers conceptualize and define research, potentially leading to varied interpretations of what constitutes research-based practice. Future research could include longitudinal studies that track research engagement over a teacher's career and further qualitative data collections to better understand the barriers and motivators for teachers' involvement in research. These limitations suggest that while the results offer important insights, they should be interpreted with caution and as part of a broader conversation about the role of research in education.

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APPENDIX

Teachers as Researchers Survey

*In your opinion, how often do teachers:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Do research	○	○	○	○	○

Briefly explain

*In your opinion, how often do teachers:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Identify significant issues	○	○	○	○	○
Make a hypothesis	○	○	○	○	○
Seek practical solutions to issues	○	○	○	○	○
Collect evidence towards a hypothesis	○	○	○	○	○
Explore issues	○	○	○	○	○
Seek practical approaches to solving issues	○	○	○	○	○
Gather resources	○	○	○	○	○

Compare resources	○	○	○	○	○
Synthesize information	○	○	○	○	○
Collect data	○	○	○	○	○
Adhere to ethical standards	○	○	○	○	○
Organize data	○	○	○	○	○
Analyze data	○	○	○	○	○
Analyze data	○	○	○	○	○
Interpret data	○	○	○	○	○
Remain objective	○	○	○	○	○
Make data-informed decisions	○	○	○	○	○
Develop plans to solve issues	○	○	○	○	○
Use results to impact current/future practice	○	○	○	○	○
Solve issues	○	○	○	○	○
Write reports	○	○	○	○	○
Share/communicate findings	○	○	○	○	○
Reflect on how issues were solved	○	○	○	○	○
Act as agents of change	○	○	○	○	○

ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY: INVESTIGATING THE MEDIATING ROLES OF STUDENTS' CAREER ADAPTABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the impact of teacher leadership on students' self-efficacy, considering the intermediary functions of students' career adaptability. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey approach, this study emphasizes quantitative analytical techniques to scrutinize the data procured from 221 students in a public university. Confirmatory factor analysis alongside structural equation modeling methodologies was employed. The results indicated that, in particular, teacher leadership has direct and indirect effects on students' self-efficacy through career adaptability. This study concludes that firstly, teacher-classroom leadership makes a difference in students' self-efficacy, and secondly, career adaptability is a valuable mediating factor that increases the degree of difference.

INTRODUCTION

Over recent decades, educational research has devoted significant attention to the concept of teacher leadership (TL). The evidence base for the positive impact of teacher leadership on a range of outcomes has grown considerably over time. Studies have demonstrated that it can enhance academic performance (Adhikary, 2017; Mujis & Harris, 2003), support student development (Uysal & Sarıer, 2019; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), and foster Career Readiness (Akert & Martin, 2012). Furthermore, recent research has expanded the purview of teacher leadership (TL) by demonstrating its influence on teacher self-efficacy, which subsequently affects student self-efficacy (S-EF). Klassen and Chiu (2010) have elucidated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy (S-EF) and critical student factors like academic achievement and motivation, as well as teacher-related aspects such as commitment and job satisfaction. Additionally, Xie et al. (2022) have demonstrated that teacher S-EF is shaped by factors like perceived principal leadership, collegial collaboration, and pedagogical tenure. Moreover, research conducted by Ma and Marion (2019) has substantiated the direct and positive impact of instructional leadership on teacher efficacy, particularly with regard to the establishment and maintenance of an optimal learning environment.

The extant literature indicates that the examination of the effects of TL is not yet fully comprehensive. This study aims to examine the multifaceted nature of teacher leadership within a Turkish public university, with a particular emphasis on its impact on students' S-EF and adaptability skills, which are essential for success in the dynamic and challenging demands inherent in their chosen careers. The objective is to conduct a rigorous examination of the specific TL methodologies that facilitate the comprehensive growth of students at this public university. By identifying effective pedagogical strategies, the research illuminates methods for enhancing comprehensive student development.

This investigation demonstrates how TL contributes indirectly to enhancing student S-EF, thereby providing them with the capacity to overcome challenges, make prudent decisions, and maintain resilience in the face of adversity. The argument is put forth that teacher leaders play a pivotal role in the creation and nurturing of an environment conducive to learning and in attaining educational success by serving as exemplars (Jimerson et al., 2015; Smith & Engelsen, 2013). Furthermore, the study articulates the manner in which these leadership practices facilitate the nurturing of adaptable skills, thereby empowering university students to navigate varied career trajectories within their sphere proficiently.

The objective of this research is to examine the influence of teacher leadership (TL) on the self-efficacy (S-EF) and career adaptability (CA) of students attending a Turkish state university. The aim of the present study is to ascertain how different TL strategies, including pedagogical approaches, mentorship, and role modeling, affect the development of these competencies. This study is guided by two primary research questions: (1) How does TL influence the self-efficacy of students within a university environment? (2) Which specific TL practices are most effective in enhancing students' career adaptability? The study proposes that TL significantly contributes to the improvement of students' self-efficacy and career adaptability, thereby equipping them to successfully navigate the multifaceted challenges of their future careers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature explains the approaches used to conceptualize TL, S-EF, and CA. TL behaviors can influence not only students' performance in lessons but also their self-confidence, goal-setting skills, and career-related abilities. These leadership styles can shape students' S-EF and enhance their motivation toward career goals.

Teacher Leadership

TL involves teachers directing and shaping the educational environment in their schools. This includes guiding other teachers, participating in school decision-making processes, and taking on administrative responsibilities within the school (Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Can, 2009; Crowther et al., 2009; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Mujis & Harris, 2003). We believe that for TL to emerge, appropriate contexts need to be created and provoked. TL is influenced by several factors, such as school culture, administrative support, teacher attitudes and behaviors, professional development, and organizational structure. A school culture that values teachers' contributions and collaboration can create an environment where TL thrives (Mujis & Harris, 2006). Teachers who view themselves as leaders and believe they can make a positive impact exhibit strong leadership qualities (Nadelson et al., 2022; Wenner & Campbell, 2016). Teachers need professional development opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills required to become effective leaders. Opportunities such as these can greatly contribute to the development of teachers’ confidence in assuming leadership positions. Teacher leaders are expected to participate in curriculum preparation, select appropriate course materials, influence student behavior, provide input on administrative decisions, guide students based on their interests and abilities, and lead the professional development of colleagues (Barth, 2001). The concept of TL is the combination of two important roles in a teacher: teaching and leading. Teacher leaders are defined as those who have teaching experience and are respected by their colleagues. The concept of TL refers to the process by which teachers influence colleagues, administrators, and other members of the school community to improve various teaching and learning activities, thereby ensuring students' learning and increasing their achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teacher leadership can significantly impact student S-EF, which is the belief in one's abilities to complete a task or achieve a goal (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Effective TL can serve as a positive role model for students by demonstrating belief in their abilities to overcome challenges. This role modeling can help students increase their S-EF. Teacher leaders can increase their students' confidence in their abilities by believing in them and helping them to see their own potential. They can provide challenging projects or assignments that allow students to use and develop their skills, and when students succeed at these tasks, their S-EF can increase (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). When students realize that their abilities can be improved through effort and practice, they are more likely to believe in their own capabilities. In summary, TL can positively impact student S-EF by providing supportive and empowering experiences in the classroom. Effective TL can create an environment that fosters students' confidence and resilience. TL has been shown to have a significant impact on student academic success. Several studies have highlighted the influence of TL on student outcomes. For instance, Robinson et al. (2008) emphasized that school leaders have small and indirect effects on student outcomes that are essentially mediated by teachers. Additionally, Nafi'a and Suyatno (2020) found that teachers' leadership is an important factor that influences students' motivation and learning success. Moreover, Khan et al. (2020) hypothesized that principals' instructional leadership indirectly enhances students' academic performance through teacher organizational commitment. Furthermore, Trigueros et al. (2020) demonstrated that TL positively predicted academic resilience and motivation, which in turn affected academic performance. Similarly, Thien and Chan (2020) highlighted that with the support and supervision from school leaders, teachers are likely to believe that students are capable of academic success regardless of their learning styles, abilities, or needs. These findings emphasize the critical significance of TL in promoting a constructive academic environment in which students can attain success.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1982) pioneered the concept of S-EF, defining it as an individual's conviction in their capability to accomplish specific tasks or succeed in certain situations. This notion has garnered extensive investigation across diverse disciplines, including developmental psychology, science education, mathematics, and computer science. As a cognitive factor influencing behavior and performance, S-EF encompasses an individual's confidence in their competencies and its impact on their decision-making, level of effort, and persistence in goal attainment (Bandura, 1982). S-EF exerts a tripartite influence on human behavior. Firstly, it guides the selection of behaviors, with individuals gravitating towards tasks that resonate with their skill set and engender a sense of security while avoiding those perceived as beyond their competencies. Furthermore, S-EF influences the magnitude and persistence of effort, particularly in contexts characterized by anxiety and uncertainty. Finally, it impacts cognitive and emotional responses; individuals with diminished S-EF may encounter heightened anxiety and worry in challenging circumstances, potentially impeding effective problem-solving (Telef & Karaca, 2011). The causal contribution of personal action mechanisms to individuals' psychosocial functioning is significant, with S-EF beliefs standing as a particularly central and pervasive element. As delineated by Bandura (1999), these beliefs reflect an individual's perceived capacity to manage prospective situations. Such beliefs exert a profound influence on aspects of cognition, motivation, and behavior in individuals.

S-EF, as defined by Bandura (1997), encapsulates a student's conviction in their capacity to successfully execute tasks or attain goals. This concept serves as an index of a student's self-confidence regarding their learning abilities and their adeptness at navigating obstacles. Students exhibiting high S-EF levels tend to demonstrate enhanced motivation, superior performance, and more favorable academic results. Conversely, low S-EF can precipitate reduced motivation and a diminished capacity to cope with challenges (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Educators are pivotal in fostering S-EF among students by creating environments conducive to success, along with providing constructive feedback and support.

Empirical studies indicate that students who perceive a congruence between their teachers' leadership styles and their cognitive orientations tend to exhibit heightened motivation and improved academic performance. Within this dynamic, S-EF beliefs emerge as a critical determinant influencing the interplay of leadership and student motivation. Elevated S-EF levels in students enhance the impact of TL on them. In scenarios where teachers articulate higher performance expectations, students endowed with greater S-EF are more inclined to embrace their teachers' visionary declarations and demonstrate increased motivation toward attaining educational objectives (Öqvist & Malmström, 2018).

During the course of engaging in various activities, students are subject to the influence of situational elements such as personal incentives or teacher feedback. These factors, including goal-setting practices, serve as markers of their educational progression. According to Schunk (1995), students' S-EF reaches its peak when they perceive an enhancement in their performance or skill proficiency. A belief among students that increased effort or the adoption of more efficacious strategies can improve performance ensures that concerns about potential failure do not diminish their S-EF.

Research findings have demonstrated that individuals' behavioral responses vary following their S-EF perceptions. Individuals with high S-EF perceptions are more likely to exert greater effort in accomplishing their tasks. In contrast, those with low S-EF perceptions may exhibit reduced effort and are inclined to ascribe their failures to external circumstances, as noted by Duman (2007).

Career Adaptability

CA denotes the degree of congruence between an individual's employment or vocational path and their intrinsic values, interests, competencies, and personality attributes. It evaluates the degree of alignment between an individual’s professional endeavors or chosen vocational route and their inherent predispositions, abilities, and personal traits. Rottinghaus (2005) posits that an individual's disposition significantly influences their perceived capability to strategize and adjust to evolving career trajectories and job duties, especially in contexts of unpredictability.

CA is characterized by an individual's proficiency in managing both the anticipated roles associated with job preparation and execution, as well as the unforeseen shifts that may occur in a professional setting. This evolution from the concept of career maturity to CA streamlines the understanding of lifespan and life domain theories, offering a unified framework to account for developmental processes across various age groups. It's crucial to acknowledge that this delineation deliberately omits subjective assessments unless explicitly identified as such. Moreover, this conceptual refinement enhances the coherence between the lifespan, life domain, and self-concept categories by centering on the individual's adjustment to their environmental milieu and underscoring a singular motivational catalyst, as discussed by Savickas (1997).

Individuals must achieve a harmonious balance between occupational demands and their environmental repercussions. The concept of CA places a greater focus on an individual's tangible skills and dispositions, moving away from more abstract, hypothetical frameworks such as maturity level. This shift accentuates the interplay between the individual and their surrounding environment, underscoring the importance of specific individual actions. Contrasting with the previous emphasis on the maturation model, which highlighted the ontogenetic processes behind these actions, the current approach advocates for counseling methodologies and assessment techniques that prioritize an operational perspective, concentrating on the manifest abilities and competencies of the individual, as delineated by Super and Knasel (1981). Carrier adaptability plays a crucial role in shaping student S-EF. Research has shown that CA is positively related to career decision S-EF, indicating that students with higher CA feel more efficacious in making career decisions (Duffy et al., 2015). Additionally, the mediating role of CA in influencing entrepreneurial S-EF has been highlighted, emphasizing the positive impact of CA on entrepreneurial intention among college students. Moreover, a proactive personality has been found to affect CA, with career decision-making S-EF playing a mediating role in this relationship (Hou et al., 2014). Furthermore, psychological adaptation has been linked to academic S-EF, indicating a significant relationship between students' psychological adaptation and their S-EF in academic settings (Bulgan & Çiftçi, 2018). Academic S-EF has also been found to influence academic adjustment in students, highlighting the impact of S-EF on students' adaptation to academic challenges. Additionally, the relationship between social media usage, multitasking, and S-EF has been explored, revealing a positive and significant association between social media usage, multitasking, and students' S-EF (Mohammed et al., 2021). Moreover, academic S-EF has been identified as a significant factor influencing students' academic performance, emphasizing the crucial role of S-EF beliefs in determining students' academic success (Boahene et al., 2019).

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The literature provides compelling evidence that Teacher Leadership (TL) significantly impacts students' perceptions and thoughts about Self-Efficacy (S-EF), as well as their beliefs and attitudes toward better career adaptation. Recognizing that teachers serve as instructional leaders who are expected to elevate students' S-EF and professional Career Adaptability (CA) while enhancing academic achievement, this study aims to establish a clear connection between TL and students' S-EF. The importance of this research lies in its potential to demonstrate how effective TL not only boosts academic performance but also fosters individuals who are better equipped to adapt to their future careers through a process-oriented approach. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to propose that TL directly influences students' perceptions of CA and S-EF. We specifically hypothesize that CA mediates the relationship between TL and S-EF. Additionally, considering our first two hypotheses, we argue that the General Academic Value of Education (G-AVE), which affects student achievement, also impacts students' CA and S-EF. By investigating these relationships, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights into how teacher leadership can be leveraged to enhance students' self-efficacy and career adaptability, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.

METHOD

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design and quantitative research techniques. According to Cohen et al. (2017), a cross-sectional survey gathers data from a designated population or a representative sample at a singular temporal instance. The primary goal of this type of survey is to get a snapshot of how the participants feel or look at a given moment. Consequently, it helps to understand how often certain characteristics, results, or opinions occur within the group being studied. This segment delineates the composition of the study sample, methodologies employed for data acquisition, the variables and instruments utilized for measurement, and the strategic approach adopted for data analysis.

Sample and Collection of Data

The present study was executed in Istanbul, the most populous city in Turkey. The participants employed various scales for data gathering, engaging a cohort of 221 university students enrolled at a public university. These participants were involved during the 2021-2022 academic year. Before the commencement of the study, approval for the use of these scales was duly obtained from the University's Ethics Committee. The method of data collection entailed the distribution of an electronic questionnaire, developed using Google Forms, to the participants. The respondents, in this case, the students, completed this electronic form. It is pertinent to note that within the context of this study, the term 'universe' is utilized in lieu of 'sample' to describe the group under investigation.This is because the entire universe was reached. The majority of students who took part in the study were male (n=211, 95.5%), while only a small proportion of female students participated (n=10, 4.5%). Students' ages were 17 (n=2, 7.7%), 18 (n=40, 18.1%), 19 (n=91, 41.3%), 20 (n=72, 32.6%), 21 (n=15, 6.8%), and 22 (n=1, 0.5%). Students' birthplaces were mostly metropolises (n=206, 93.3%), and few were from small cities (n=15, 6.7%). Their Grade Averages (G-AVE) were 90-100 (n=19, 8.6%), 80-89 (n=91, 41.2%), 70-79 (n=71, 32.1%), 60-69 (n=35, 15.8%), and below 59 (n=5, 2.3%).

The TL Scale is a 25-item, 5-point Likert scale developed by Karabağ-Köse (2019), categorized into four factors: interaction, motivation, classroom processes, and out-of-school processes, with ratings from 1 (never) to 5 (always) and no reverse-scored items. While the original scale met validity and reliability criteria, this study reexamined these aspects. Due to the strict hierarchical structure of boarding students and the limited impact of out-of-school processes, exploratory factor analysis reduced the dimensions to three, excluding questions like "Teachers are open to criticism" and "Teachers are interested in students' problems outside of school and the classroom." After removing items with low factor loadings, 14 questions remained. Factor loadings in the interaction dimension ranged from 0.523 to 0.756, and in the classroom processes sub-dimension from 0.665 to 0.773. Finally, in the final classroom processes dimension, the factor loadings ranged from 0.424 to 0.827. In the next stage, confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the scale. The fit indices of the scale produced an acceptable fit (χ^2= 113; *df* = 72; χ^2 / *df* = 1.56; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual [SRMR]= .03; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA]= .05; Comparative Fit Index [CFI]= .96). The dimensions' internal consistency coefficients are as follows: 0.91 for the interaction dimension, 0.87 for the motivation dimension, and 0.71 for the classroom processes dimension. The main variable's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.96, indicating high reliability.

The Academic S-EF Scale is a 33-item, 5-point Likert scale measuring four factors: cognitive practices, social status, technical skills, and cooperation, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) and no reverse-scored items. Developed by Owen and Froman (1988) and adapted into Turkish by Ekici (2012), the scale's validity and reliability were re-examined in this study. An exploratory factor analysis confirmed four dimensions. Since the study focused on preparatory school language students, items like "Using simple math calculations" and "Judging the opinion of an instructor in class" were excluded due to incompatibility.

Questions with low factor loadings were excluded from the initial exploratory factor analysis. Twenty questions remained for analysis. Factor loadings for the cognitive practices dimension ranged from 0.839 to 0.409; for the social status sub-dimension from 0.740 to 0.396; for the technical skills sub-dimension, from 0.813 to 0.403; and for the cooperation sub-dimension from 0.931 to 0.572. The next step involved conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on the scale. The fit indices of the scale produced an acceptable fit χ^2 = 322; *df* = 161; χ^2 / *df* = 2; SRMR (Standardized

Root Mean Square Residual)= .04; RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)= .06; CFI (Comparative Fit Index)= .91). The dimensions demonstrate internal consistency with coefficients of .82 for cognitive practices, .81 for social status, .84 for technical skills, and .77 for cooperation. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the primary variable was .91, providing strong evidence of reliability.

The CA scale comprises four subscales: anxiety, control, curiosity, and confidence. The scale was a five-point Likert type and had 19 questions. Participants answered the items ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale provides construct validity and a satisfactory level of reliability in the field of social sciences. To apply the scale, validity and reliability studies were repeated for this study. In this study, an initial exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted, leading to the exclusion of items with inadequate factor loadings and the retention of 9 questions.

The revised EFA revealed that factor loadings for items within the self-improvement dimension fluctuated between 0.699 and 0.859. In the self-refinement sub-dimension, these loadings ranged from 0.556 to 0.837. Following this, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the refined scale. The resulting fit indices suggested an acceptable fit for the model: χ^2= 119; *df*= 46; χ^2/df= 2.58, RMSEA=.08 (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), CFI= .97 (Comparative Fit Index), and SRMR= .03 (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual). Regarding the internal consistency of the scale, the coefficients were robust, with the development dimension scoring .95 and the improvement dimension scoring .89. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the primary variable was determined to be .95, which underscores the high reliability of the scale. The Students' survey was employed to evaluate teachers' classroom leadership practices (TL) associated with students' S-EF, and students' CA. We asked students to assess their perceptions of their teachers' TL, and their perceptions of their CA. The use of different variables for the study decreased the risks of common method variance. G-AVE was included as the exogenous factor for the SEM model.

Statistics

In addressing the posed research inquiries, a comprehensive methodology was employed. The initial phase involved conducting exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses on a trio of distinct scales to evaluate their structural robustness and delineate the attributes of the latent variables under examination. Subsequently, Cronbach's alpha test was applied as a mechanism to ascertain the internal consistency prevalent within these measures. Next, descriptive analysis of students' perceptions of TL, S-EF, and CA, and correlation analysis to examine the relationship between TL, S-EF, and CA were accomplished. ML (Maximum likelihood) calculations were conducted and model fit was held by SRMR (standardized root mean square residual), RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), TLI (Tucker-Lewis index), and CFI (comparative fit index) as indices (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Model fit was considered acceptable with CFI (comparative fit index) > 0.90, SRMR (standardized root mean square residual)< 0.11, TLI (Tucker-Lewis index) > 0.90, and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) < 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1998). JAMOVI 2.3.28 was used to define the measurement model and analyze the structural parameters between the constructs. For the mediation analysis, bootstrapping tests were employed to calculate the indirect effect of an independent variable using a resampling estimation technique that generates confidence intervals (CIs) for the results. When bootstrapping, the point estimates for the total effect, indirect effect, and direct effect are the means calculated over 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Williams & MacKinnon, 2008). In this survey, the direct effect of TL on S-EF, and the mediating effect of CA on S-EF were tested. In the SEM model TL and G-AVE were used as exogenous covariates.

RESULTS

In this section of the recent study, we start with an explanation of the model, and right after, we go on to address the research questions.

Characteristics of The Assessments of The Research Construction and Model

In this section, descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients, and correlation analysis results were provided. We searched for reliability employing convergent validity. All three scales fulfilled the necessary reliability value of .70 in Table 1. The composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity which were measured by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were above 0.70. Convergent validity was met showing that CR was larger than AVE (Hair et al., 2009).

The mean scores indicated that they were high for all three scales on the 5-point Likert-type scale. The values ranged from 3.57 to 4.25. The mean and standard deviation values for the scales were TL (M=3.64, SD=0.71), S-EF (M=3.57, SD=0.61), and CA (M=4.25, SD=0.77). The mean values are quite above average which means relatively high. Also, the standard deviation values were high meaning that teachers' responses were heterogeneous. G-AVE (M=2.62, SD=0.92) has values that are above the mean. As for SD, it is heterogeneous. Table 1 shows, a moderate, positive, and significant correlation between TL and S-EF (r= .52; $p < .001$) and CA (r= .228; $p < .001$). S-EF also has a low-level correlation with CA (r= .295; $p < .001$). Other variables showed no significant correlations.

Table 1. Means and standard deviation of variables in the research model and correlation values

	M	SD	G-AVE	CR	A	TL	S-EF	KU	G-AVE
ÖSL	3.64	0.71	0.68	0.96	0.92	-	-	-	-
ÖZY	3.57	0.61	0.71	0.92	0.91	0.520***	-	-	-
KU	4.25	0.77	0.65	0.91	0.95	0.228***	0.295***	-	-
G-AVE	2.62	0.92	-	-	-	-0.139	-0.214	0.086	-

*Note. TL=Teacher Leadership, S-EF=Self-Efficacy, CA=Carier Adaptability, Grade Average=G-AVE, n=221 Students, p < .05, **p < .001, ***p < .0001*

How Does TL Affect Students' CA and Students' S-EF?

We built a model about the effect of TL on student S-EF and how career adjustment mediates this effect. We also added G-AVE which we predicted to have an effect on the S-EF and career adjustment of students (see Fig. 1).

Table 2. Baseline Model test scores and Fit indices the model proposed

Model	χ^2	*Df*	P	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI		TLI
						Lower	Upper	
Baseline	118	14	0.001***	0.996	0.022	0.00	0.106	0.986

*Note. CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean-square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square; p < .05, **p < .001, ***p < .0001*

The path model (see Fig. 1) confirmed our model using AMOS 22. The model that we offered generated acceptable goodness-of-fit values according to Hu and Bentler (1999). The path model exhibits that TL showed a strong positive direct effect on students' S-EF ($\beta = 0.98$, $p < .001$), and a strong positive direct effect on students' CA ($\beta = 0.97$, $p < .001$). G-AVE showed a moderate positive direct effect on students' CA ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$), and a moderate negative direct effect on students' S-EF ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < .001$). Thus, we went on with bootstrap analysis to interpret the model we established.

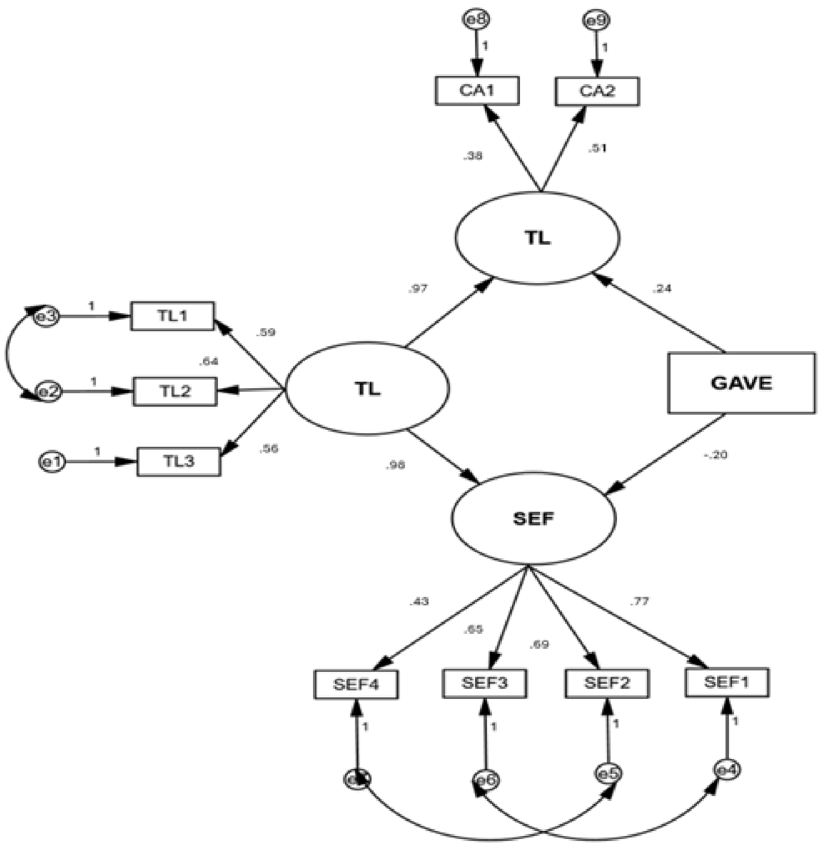

Fig 1. Path relationships among the variables in the structural equation model

We employed bootstrapping to further examine the role of students' S-EF as a moderator of TL effects on students' CA. It explained the test on the first finding given in the SEM analysis. We can assume that the bootstrapping reaffirmed the direct and indirect effects of TL.

Table 3. Bootstrapping mediation estimates of TL and S-EF

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		P	Mediation
				Lower	Upper		
Indirect	axbc	0.039	0.026	0.006	0.106	<.001	8.17
Direct		0.441	0.306	0.306	0.565	<.001	91.82
Total	c+axb	0.480	0.362	0.362	0.598	<.001	100.0
Path Estimates							
TL → S-EF	a	0.248	0.071	0.071	0.385	<.001	-
S-EF → CA	b	0.158	0.075	0.075	0.335	0.037	-
TL → CA	c	0.441	0.065	0.065	0.565	<.001	-

Note. TL=Teacher Leadership, CA= Carrier Adaptability, S-EF= Self- Efficacy, , n=221
*p < .05, **p < .001, ***p < .0001*

The impact of TL on students' S-EF was both significant and meaningful (β = 0.480, CI [0.362, 0.598], p < .001). This impact consisted of a significant direct effect (β = 0.441, CI [0.306, 0.565], p < .001) and a smaller indirect effect through S-EF (β = 0.039, CI [0.006, 0.106], p < .001). Additionally, the bootstrap analysis revealed that 91.82% of the impact of TL on S-EF was direct, and 8.17% indirect through CA. In summary, this mediation analysis, based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples, provides additional support for a partial mediation model consisting of moderate effect sizes that are statistically significant.

Does G-AVE Affect the Students' CA and Students' S-EF?

The model that we offered generated acceptable Goodness-of-fit values according to Hu and Bentler (1999). G-AVE showed a significant positive direct effect on students' CA (β = 0.137, p < .001) and a significant negative direct effect on CA (β = -0.143, p < .001). The effect sizes (β) were statistically significant and in the small range, indicating a robust model. We conducted a bootstrap analysis to interpret the established model and further examine the role of students' S-EF as a moderator of G-AVE effects on students' CA. It explained the test on the first finding given in the SEM analysis (See Table 1). It can be assumed that the bootstrapping process confirmed both the direct and indirect effects of TL.

Table 4. Bootstrapping mediation estimates of G-AVE and S-EF

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% CI		P	Mediation
				Lower	Upper		
Indirect	axbc	0.019	0.016	-0.006	0.052	0.247	10.1
Direct		-0.172	0.306	-0.265	-0.084	<.001	89.9
Total	c+axb	-0.153	0.362	-0.250	-0.058	0.002	100.0
Path Estimates							
G-AVE → S-EF	a	0.072	0.062	-0.045	0.193	0.247	-
S-EF → CA	b	0.268	0.093	0.125	0.474	0.003	-
G-AVE → CA	c	-0.172	0.045	-0.265	-0.084	<.001	-

The total effect of G-AVE on Students' S-EF was negative and statistically not significant (β = -0.153, CI [-0.250, -0.058], p=0.247). This total effect showed a little direct effect (β = -0.017, CI [-0.265, -0.084] p < .001) and a smaller indirect effect through CA (β = 0.019, CI [-0.006, 0.052], p < .001). Additionally, the bootstrap analysis indicated that 89.9% of the impact of G-AVE on S-EF was direct, while 10.1% was indirect through CA. This mediation analysis, which was based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples, provides further evidence for a partial mediation model with moderate effect sizes that are statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

This present research was conducted to show that classroom teachers with classroom leadership ability influence students' self-efficacy, and it enables students' career adaptability for their better careers in the future. In this part of the research, we have discussed the limitations of the study, presented our interpretation of the findings, and explored the implications for both research and practice.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations to consider. Conducted on a faculty at a state university in Turkey, the findings may lack generalizability if participants who did not provide data differ systematically from those who did. The homogenous sample likely limited variance, potentially underestimating associations between constructs. Factors such as school culture, administrative support, teacher attitudes, professional development, and organizational structure significantly influence teacher leadership, with collaborative environments fostering its growth (Muijs & Harris, 2006). The second limitation is that teacher leadership was assessed solely from students' perspectives, overlooking factors like school culture, teacher attitudes, administrative support, and organizational structure. To ease the questionnaire burden, the EFA and CFA scales were shortened. While a more comprehensive scale could provide greater detail, the three-item measures are adequate for assessing psychological constructs. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to understanding the impact of teacher leadership on self-efficacy and career adaptability.

Interpretations of Findings

The first result from the first research question of this study is the confirmation of the partial mediation effect of teacher leadership on students' self-efficacy. In particular, teacher leadership has direct and indirect effects on students' self-efficacy through career adaptability. This finding shows that firstly, teacher leadership makes a difference in students' self-efficacy, and secondly, career adaptability is a valuable mediating factor that increases the degree of difference. The fact that teacher leadership affects both students' career adaptability and self-efficacy is in line with other studies in the field. (Lord & Miller, 2000; Ulusoy, 2007). Teacher leadership can have a significant impact on various aspects of educational settings such as instructional practices in the classroom sharing best practices (Nguyen et al., 2020); playing a crucial role in designing and facilitating professional development opportunities for their students (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015; Lumpkin et al., 2014); and creating a positive and collaborative school climate (Kilinç, 2014), which can lead to a more supportive and inclusive learning environment (King, 2017). Besides, teacher leaders act as bridges between the school and the community. They can facilitate communication and collaboration with parents, which can lead to greater support for students' education (Vranješević & Frost, 2016). In sum, empirical studies confirm the importance of teacher leadership in educational contexts (West, 2012). The confirmation of our partial model is significant for several reasons. Firstly, career adaptability is recognized as a key competency that plays a crucial role in young people's career success (O'Connell et al., 2007). This refers to the readiness of individuals to overcome unforeseen changes in work conditions by preparing for predictable tasks and participating in job roles (Savickas, 1997). Career adaptability is a psychological construct that indicates the readiness of young individuals to acquire the necessary skills and overcome professional development tasks, job changes, stress levels, and social support in the current and near future (Öztemel & Akyol, 2019). It includes attitudes, competencies, and behaviors that are necessary for young students to adapt to their jobs and changing work life during the career development process (Yousefi et al., 2011).

The second research question that constitutes the framework of this study was to determine the effect of students' G-AVE on career adaptability and self-efficacy. In our findings, we found that students' G-AVE positively affected career adaptability. The developmental, cognitive and psychosocial results of a person during his/her career are career development (Herr et al., 2004). This finding shows that achieving high grades plays an important role in ensuring career adaptation. However, it is another finding of the research question that only student G-AVE has a negative effect on self-efficacy. Studies in the field generally suggest that academic achievement is a variable that predicts self-efficacy (Gold, 2010; Pektaş, 2010). However, there are also explanations that self-efficacy is field-specific and cannot be considered in terms of every discipline (Pajares, 1996). To prevent academic failure from adversely affecting self-efficacy, it is believed that self-efficacy can be enhanced when administrators and teacher leaders in education contexts assist students in developing academic and career goals, assess their professional and individual competencies and provide learning opportunities for them.

CONCLUSIONS

Studies on the old concept of leadership in schools have largely focused on the responsibilities of the headteacher (Cisler & Bruce, 2013; Reid, 2021). Yet, the studies that focused on TL aimed to obtain different definitions of the concept (Harris, 2005; Wenner & Campbell, 2016) to provide evidence of how TL affects schools, classes and students (Crowther et al., 2009; Murphy, 2005), and to investigate barriers to TL (Mujis & Harris, 2003). Our study contributes to the field of Teacher Leadership as it affects students' self-efficacy and career adaptibility. The study investigates the influence of teacher leadership on students' self-efficacy. It has been found that teacher leadership has a direct and immediate impact on students' self-efficacy. This study highlights that teacher leaders can increase students' belief in their own abilities to succeed in specific tasks or goals without any intermediary variables. Teacher leadership affects students' self-efficacy indirectly by enhancing their readiness and resources to cope with predictable and unpredictable changes and tasks in their career development. The presence of strong teacher leadership can foster career adaptability in students, which in turn, can increase their self-efficacy. Another important conclusion of our study is that the higher the academic achievement of the students, the more developed their ability to adapt and be ready for their careers. This indicates that academic achievement is an important factor in developing students' flexibility and adaptability in their career transition and career development processes. This is a call for educational leaders to consider customized strategies to support students' academic performance and self-belief. It highlights the need to shape educational programs and practices in light of such results to ensure that students acquire the resilience and competencies needed to successfully and confidently move forward in both their academic and professional lives.

We would like to underline the following implications for practicing teachers in relation to the study; although there is a strict hierarchical structure, teachers should develop a classroom culture that supports their students' career adaptation efforts. They should also create a democratic climate that favors teamwork among students. They should have the skills to lead a school-wide school improvement initiative. They should be facilitators and coordinators of a professional learning community or groups of teachers working with students to develop their learning abilities which impact students' self-efficacy. They should even go one step further and be a spontaneous leader in the context of a distributed leadership approach in the organization in which they work because leadership is no longer an elite construct developed by one person alone. Gronn (2003) argued that when people cooperate and share their efforts and knowledge, they are more than parts of a whole.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

This research significantly contributes to educational planning by illuminating the crucial role of teacher leadership in enhancing students’ self-efficacy, particularly through the mediating influence of career adaptability. By highlighting the direct and indirect impacts of teacher leadership on students' self-efficacy, educational planners and administrators can design teacher development programs that prioritize leadership skills, aiming to cultivate a more adaptable, self-assured student body.

Furthermore, the identification of career adaptability as a significant mediator underscores the need for curriculum designs that integrate career planning and adaptability training. Consequently, this study offers a compelling argument for the inclusion of teacher leadership development and career adaptability enhancement in educational planning, to prepare students not just academically but also for the challenges of their future careers, thereby enriching the educational ecosystem's responsiveness to the evolving demands of the workforce.

ETHICS PERMISSION

This research’s ethics permission was granted by the National Defense University Social Sciences and Humanities Human Research Ethics Committee. Number: E-54589112-770-139795

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QUIET QUITTING BEHAVIORS OF TEACHERS WORKING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN TÜRKİYE: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to determine the opinions of teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Türkiye regarding the quiet quitting behavior they observe in teachers. The phenomenological approach was used in the research conducted with the qualitative research method. There are 33 teachers and 14 school administrators in the study group of the research. The data were collected through survey. Descriptive analysis and conventional content analysis were used to analyze the data. All the participants reported observing an increase in quiet quitting behaviors among teachers in recent years. These behaviors include actions behaviors such as "not contributing, showing low performance, minimizing relationships and communication, low motivation, and lack of interest in professional issues and professional development." Participants' opinions about the reasons for quiet quitting behavior were categorized under the theme of system-related reasons. The responses within this theme were further divided into sub-themes such as "low salaries, teachers' feeling worthless, unfair practices of school principals, inadequacies of school principals, dominance of parents and students in the education system, indifference of students and their parents, disbelief in the education system, political and union divisions in schools, and the challenges of constant change in the education system."

INTRODUCTION

Although the concept of quiet quitting appeared in the German management literature in the early 1980s (Jehle & Schmitz, 2007; Seçer, 2009; Üstün & Tatlı, 2020), it has not become widespread worldwide. Although it is claimed on the Internet and in dozens of articles that the concept of quiet quitting was first used by Mark Boldger in an economics symposium in 2009, Hitt (2022) determined that this was not true as a result of his interview with Boldger. First of all, Boldger made this speech in a protest action, not in a symposium. Additionally, Boldger did not exactly make a quiet quitting statement in this action. The person who caused the concept of quiet quitting becoming popular recently and turning into a trend is a TikTok user named Zaid Khan, who is an engineer. In the video he published on the social media, Khan said, "Quiet quitting does not mean quitting your job. It just means preventing your work from taking over your life. Your job is not your life! Your value cannot be defined by what you produce" and managed to reach millions of people (Çalışkan, 2023; Çimen & Yılmaz, 2023; Örücü & Hasırcı, 2023; Yıldız & Özmenekşe, 2022). Thus, the concept of quiet quitting has come to be used by many people around the world. The concept attracted more attention with another video published by Bryan Creely on TikTok and YouTube (2022). Since then, quiet quitting behavior has been the subject of many platforms such as *Nature, Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg and Guardian* as well as scientific articles.

The frequent use of the concept coincides with the Covid-19 pandemic period because the Covid-19 pandemic has caused many thoughts about work and life to change (Boz et al., 2023) and has caused the quiet quitting behavior to spread all over the world. This situation has been frequently emphasized in various sources. According to SHRM Research Institute's (2022) research, 36% of human resources professionals reported that quiet quitting behavior actively occurs in their institutions. According to the Gallup 2022 survey, approximately 50% of US employees stated that they quit their works quietly (Harter, 2022). According to the feedback BetterUp (2022) received from approximately 3,000 employees in the UK, one in three employees in the UK describe themselves as quiet quitters. According to the research, leadership and organizational culture are factors that affect quiet quitting (Perry, 2023). In a study conducted in Turkey (Youthall, 2022), it was determined that 24% of young people in Turkey are in the quiet quitting process; 46.7% of them were prone to this concept.

The concept of quiet quitting is not related to the formal resignation of the employee (Formica & Sfodera, 2022), but is expressed as the person doing his job with minimum performance and completing his working hours. In other words, it means that the employee only does what he is supposed to do and does not exhibit any extra effort or behavior other than that. In short, the concept of quiet quitting means that organizational employees do not go beyond the responsibilities specified in their job descriptions (Örücü & Hasırcı, 2023). Accordingly, it can be said that the concept of quiet quitting is characterized by concepts such as "secretly and consciously doing it, decreasing performance, decreasing the sense of belonging, and avoiding taking initiative" (Yılmaz et al., 2024).

Since those who initiate the quiet quitting movement generally consist of people working in for-profit organizations/companies, preliminary research on the subject (Alat & Filizöz, 2021; Anand et al., 2024; Galanis et al., 2023; Nordgren & Björs, 2023) were generally done in for-profit organizations. There are few studies conducted in educational organizations (Hapsari & Dwianto, 2024; Thekkechangarapatti, 2023). In one of these studies, Thekkechangarapatti (2023) examined three case studies about quiet quitting experienced by teachers in India. In their research in Indonesia, Hapsari and Dwianto (2024) attempted to explain the emergence of the quiet quitting phenomenon as being related to the tendency for work-life balance. For this purpose, literature reviews and interviews with teachers were conducted in the research.

In a quantitative study conducted to determine the quiet quitting behaviors of teachers in Turkey, Yılmaz (2024) examined teachers in public schools. The findings revealed that these teachers exhibit quiet quitting behaviors at a low level. Additionally, participants reported sometimes feeling undervalued within the education system. Özen et al. (2024) identified four factors affecting teachers' quiet quitting behavior in their research. These are administrative factors, social status, economic situation and factors affecting teachers' well-being.

No research other than this study could be found in Turkey. However, there is a need for more research on the quiet quitting behavior of teachers, especially in a system like the Turkish education system, which is overly centralized, continuously changing, and faces numerous challenges regarding education personnel. A key issue regarding quiet quitting behavior is determining how teachers interpret it. To explore this, a qualitative research approach was used to determine how teachers working in public schools exemplified quiet quitting behaviors.

Turkish Educational System

Turkey is a country that connects Asia and Europe. The country's population is more than 85 million (Turkish Statistical Institute [TSI], 2023). In the 2023-2024 academic year, there are a total of 74 thousand 549 schools at the preschool, primary, and secondary education levels in Turkey and a total of 19 million 126 thousand 106 students are studying in these schools. The number of teachers working in formal education institutions is 1 million 146 thousand 177 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2024). The Turkish education system is known for its centralized structure (Fretwell & Wheeler, 2001; Yılmaz, 2022) and has one of the most centralized education systems among OECD countries. Although there are provincial and district national education directorates in Turkey, they act as administrative arms of the central bureaucracy and do not have an independent capacity (OECD, 2017). Within this centralized structure of the Turkish education system, teachers are merely passive implementers of the educational program. Schools or teachers do not have any autonomy in the system. Compared to those in many European countries and the USA, public schools in Türkiye have the least autonomy regarding resources, staffing of employees, textbook selection, curriculum selection, and teaching time planning (Yılmaz, 2022). For instance, Türkiye ranks among the lowest in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 year school autonomy index (OECD, 2016).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

In recent years, there have been many research findings about the negativities experienced or felt by teachers working in public schools in Turkey. In studies conducted in Turkey, it was determined that teachers experienced burnout (Çelik & Yılmaz, 2015; Kocakaya & Manolova-Yalçın, 2023), cynicism (Altınkurt & Yılmaz, 2016; Kalağan, & Güzeller, 2010), organizational stress (Aslan & Bakır, 2018; Karadaş & Özgün, 2023) and job dissatisfaction (Alagöz et al., 2023; Kumaş & Deniz, 2010). Research also shows that teachers were exposed to various mobbing behaviors (Çelebi & Taşçı-Kaya, 2014; Şengül et al., 2023) and exhibit organizational silence behaviors (Altınkurt, 2014; Yılmaz-Öztürk & Ataş, 2023). As a result, there are findings that teachers have a significant feeling of worthlessness (Özen et al., 2024; Sunar & Enginar, 2022; TEDMEM, 2014; Yıldız & Ünlü, 2014), especially in recent years. As a result of all these findings, it is important to determine whether teachers exhibit quiet quitting behavior. Several studies (Özen et al., 2024; Yılmaz, 2024) have been conducted on this subject. One study employed a mixed-method approach (Özen et al., 2024), while the other utilized a quantitative research method (Yılmaz, 2024). This study aimed to determine how teachers and school administrators perceive and interpret the phenomenon of quiet quitting. To achieve this, qualitative research method was used in the study.

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This study is aimed to determine the opinions of teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Turkey regarding the quiet quitting behavior of teachers. To achieve this general purpose, answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. What are the opinions of teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Turkey regarding teachers' quiet quitting behavior?
2. What examples of teachers' quiet quitting behavior do teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Turkey give?
3. What are the opinions of teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Turkey regarding the reasons for the quiet quitting behavior of teachers?

METHOD

Research Design

This research was completed by following the qualitative research method. Qualitative research aims to understand how people experience the process by exploring the meanings they attach to it. This involves developing an insight into how people make sense of the situation under study. Therefore, the goal is to examine the subject from the perspective of the interviewees, not the researcher (Merriam, 2018). In this research, we aimed to determine how teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Turkey make sense of teachers' quiet quitting behavior. To achieve this, the phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method, was deemed the most appropriate. The reason for this is that phenomenology attempts to reveal the common meanings of lived experiences and the essence of experience related to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2015).

Research Group

The most appropriate sampling technique was used to determine the opinions of teachers and school administrators on teachers' quiet quitting behaviors. In order to ensure variety in the opinions of the participants, teachers and school principals working in pre-school education institutions, primary schools, secondary schools and high schools were contacted. The survey form was organized in Google Docs and the survey link was announced to schools. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. An announcement was made to all 5 pre-school education institutions, 10 primary schools, 10 secondary schools and 10 high schools in the city center of Kütahya. As a result, 47 individuals (33 teachers and 14 school administrators) comprised the sample. Participants work in Kütahya province. Teacher participants were coded as T1, T2, T3…, while school administrators were coded as A1, A2, A3…. Table 1 provides demographic information about the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	Subject Area	Type of School	Seniority (Year)
T1	Female	Pre-school	Pre-school education	5
T2	Female	Guidance and counseling	Primary school	12
T3	Female	Pre-school	Pre-school education	13
T4	Male	Religion and ethics	High school	5
T5	Female	Religion and ethics	Secondary school	8
T6	Female	Visual arts	Secondary school	7
T7	Male	Religion and ethics	High school	7
T8	Female	Primary school	Primary school	5
T9	Female	Social studies	Secondary school	15
T10	Female	Primary school	Primary school	17
T11	Male	Geography	High school	15
T12	Male	Foreign language	Secondary school	13
T13	Male	Music	High school	12
T14	Male	Science	Secondary school	17
T15	Male	Primary school	Primary school	9
T16	Female	Primary school	Primary school	17
T17	Male	Science	Secondary school	10
T18	Female	Information technologies	Secondary school	11
T19	Female	Child development	High school	14
T20	Female	Chemistry	High school	6

Table 1 (continued)

Demographic Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	Subject Area	Type of School	Seniority (Year)
T21	Female	Guidance and counseling	High school	10
T22	Female	Science	Secondary school	7
T23	Female	Pre-school	Primary school	10
T24	Female	Primary school	Primary school	14
T25	Female	Science	Secondary school	7
T26	Male	Foreign language	High school	8
T27	Female	Primary school	Primary school	16
T28	Male	Pre-school	Secondary school	2
T29	Male	Mathematics	Secondary school	23
T30	Female	Primary school	Primary school	10
T31	Male	Mathematics	High school	11
T32	Male	Religion and ethics	High school	10
T33	Female	Primary school	Primary school	3
A1	Male	Religion and ethics	High school	16
A2	Female	Mathematics	High school	9
A3	Male	Pre-school	Pre-school education	13
A4	Female	Primary school	Primary school	26
A5	Male	Primary school	Primary school	12
A6	Female	Pre-school	Pre-school education	12
A7	Male	Social studies	Secondary school	14
A8	Female	Foreign language	High school	10
A9	Male	Information technologies	High school	9
A10	Male	Turkish	Secondary school	26
A11	Male	Turkish	Secondary school	10
A12	Male	Pre-school	Pre-school education	22
A13	Female	Pre-school	Secondary school	14
A14	Male	Foreign language	High school	10

As seen in Table 1, the participants include 2 teachers and 3 school principals from pre-school education institutions; 10 teachers and 2 school principals from primary schools; 11 teachers and 4 school principals from secondary schools; and 10 teachers and 5 school principals from high schools. The seniority of the participants varies between 2 and 26 years. 25 of the participants are women and 22 are men. They teach in 15 different subject areas.

Data Collection

The data of the research were collected using a survey form. The survey form was sent to the e-mail addresses of the participants as a word file and they were asked to provide responses. Participants were not given a limit for their opinions and were informed that they could write as much as they wanted. The form included various personal information [gender, subject area, type of school, seniority, duty (school administrator - teacher)] as well as three qualitative questions:

1. Do you observe quiet quitting behavior in your school or in other schools (based on your observations)?
2. Explain the quiet quitting behaviors you observed with examples.
3. In your opinion, what are the reasons for the quiet quitting behaviors you have observed?

To develop the qualitative questions, studies in the relevant literature, especially questions used in research-based studies, were examined. Feedback on the prepared/drafted questions was obtained from six academics: two specializing in measurement and evaluation, two in educational sciences, and two in teacher education. In line with the suggestions from academics, the questions were revised and finalized for implementation.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011) and conventional content analysis (Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005) were used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis is an analysis approach that includes the steps of processing qualitative data, defining the findings, and interpreting the identified findings based on a predetermined framework (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Conventional content analysis is a method that allows themes, categories, and their names to flow from the data. The advantage of the conventional approach to content analysis is that information is obtained directly from participants rather than preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the first stage of the content analysis section, a framework for data analysis was created based on the questions in the interview form. In this way, the interview form questions were used as themes and the data under which themes would be organized and presented were determined. In the second stage, the data were read and organized based on the created framework. At this stage, it was attempted to bring the data together in a meaningful and logical way. In the third stage, the edited data were identified and direct quotations were used where necessary. In the fourth stage, the identified findings were correlated and explained. Qualitative analyses were conducted manually without using any software.

To ensure the validity of the research process, direct quotations were made from the participants' opinions and the results were explained based on them. For reliability, the research process was described in detail. The following measures were taken to enhance the credibility of the research:

- To ensure participant diversity the data were collected from school administrators and teachers.
- The data obtained during the study were compared with each other and interpreted.
- For transferability, direct quotations were made from the participants' statements in the categories obtained as a result of the data analysis.
- For consistency, researchers who have in-depth knowledge of the research and are experts in qualitative research were asked to review this research, and their suggestions and criticisms were taken into account.
- For confirmability, all data from the beginning to the end of the research was stored and kept for review when necessary.

FINDINGS

Opinions about Quiet Quitting Behavior Exhibition

All 33 teachers and 14 school administrators (f=47) who participated in the research stated that they observed quiet quitting behavior among teachers and that this has increased even more in recent years:

> *When it comes to quiet quitting behavior, it has always existed, but we just didn't have the right definition for the examples of behavior we saw. In fact, it cannot be said that the reasons underlying this increasingly widespread concept have changed much (T3).*
>
> *Yes, the number of teachers engaging in these behaviors is increasing (T4).*
>
> *Quiet quitting behaviors have been increasing significantly in our institution recently (A1).*
>
> *Unfortunately, I am being in the first place, I observe quiet quitting behaviors in many of my friends (A14).*

Both teachers and school administrators agree that quiet quitting behavior among teachers is increasing. Participants also stated that teachers engaged in quiet quitting can be found in almost every school (A4) and that quiet quitting behaviors may manifest differently in each school (T16).

Examples of Quiet Quitting Behavior

Examples of quiet quitting behavior identified by the participants were categorized under the following themes: *Not contributing* (f=44), *showing low performance* (f=26), *minimizing relationships and communication* (f=26), *low motivation* (f=19) and *lack of interest in professional issues and professional development* (f=10).

The responses given by the participants under the theme of not contributing (f=44) consisted of the subthemes of "not making any extra contributions (f=22), not expressing opinions in meetings (f=11), not participating in school activities (f=6) and not attending in meetings (f=5)". The teachers stated that teachers who exhibited quiet quitting behavior generally did not want to contribute to any activities, studies or projects at school, stayed away from such activities and even did not want to participate when they were offered:

> *He/she would do everything related to his class and school at minimum and would stand aside, not even do an extra activity. He/she would not provide support unless the school administration asked him/her for something. He/she would not participate in any activity unless it was necessary, and over time he/she gave up his/her duties (T2).*
>
> *The number of teachers who always want to isolate themselves from work and do not want to take part in any way is increasing. For example, even when sharing a task, potentials that are reluctant and absent even though their names are mentioned are increasing (T4).*

School administrators stated that the behavior of not expressing an opinion or remaining silent in meetings is frequently exhibited. According to school administrators, some teachers do not even participate in the events (f=6) and meetings (f=5) organized at school. Some teachers, even if they attend the meetings, do not make any opinions, suggestions or contributions (f=11). This behavior usually stems from the idea that the meeting should end as soon as possible so that they can leave:

> *The behavior of not attending meetings or being reluctant in the meetings is clearly evident in the teachers' board meeting at the beginning of the year and in the other meetings (A4).*

> *A teacher who actively participates in school meetings and activities, and even organizes social events himself/herself, becomes reluctant to attend the meetings after a while, and he/she becomes reluctant to participate, let alone organize events (A6).*

One of the situations that arise due to the teachers' minimized contribution levels is that teachers *show low performance* (f=26). The responses within this theme consisted of the "minimizing performance (f=16), limiting work to working hours (f=7), and obtaining a medical report even though it is not necessary (f=3)" sub-themes. One participant stated that he/she has started to hear the phrase "*I go to class, and I leave, I get my money, I don't interfere with anything else (T7)*" a lot lately. Participants stated that teachers who experience quiet quitting behavior generally "*leave as if they were running away from school as soon as the bell rings (T7); that they do not want to be as busy as possible with school-related work after working hours (A14); they want to attend class and go home as soon as possible (A10)*." Teachers and school administrators observed similar teacher behaviors on this theme.

The answers given by the participants in the theme of *minimizing relationships and communication* (f=26) consisted of "not participating in social events (f=14), minimizing communication with colleagues (f=7) and minimizing communication with the school administration (f=5)" sub-themes. Teachers who exhibit quiet quitting behavior do not participate in social events organized at the school and minimize their communication with their colleagues and the school administration.

In this theme, while teachers mostly emphasized the behavior of not communicating with administrators or colleagues unless necessary (T5, T6, T9, T10, T21), school administrators mostly emphasized the behavior of not participating in school activities (A6, A9, A14).

The answers given by the participants in the theme of *low motivation* (f =19) consisted of "low motivation (f=15) and decreased professional commitment (f=4)" sub-themes. One of the quiet quitting behaviors observed in teachers is related to the decrease in motivation and professional commitment. Both teachers and school administrators reported a notable decline in the motivation of teachers who experienced quiet quitting behavior. Behaviors such as reluctance, calmness, apathy, intimidation, low enthusiasm, decrease in professional commitment and job satisfaction are observed in teachers who experience quiet quitting:

> *I observe that some people have low motivation. This lack of motivation causes situations such as intense calmness, apathy and intimidation in the person (T6).*

Participants stated that teachers *lost their passion for their job over time (T10)* due to low motivation and that they *no longer enjoyed doing the job and expressed this at every opportunity (T9)*. One of the behaviors that occur due to low motivation and low performance is teachers' *lack of interest in professional issues and professional development* (f=10). The answers given by the participants in this theme consisted of "lack of interest in education-related issues (f=8) and lack of interest in professional development (f=2)" sub-themes. Participants stated that teachers experiencing quiet quitting "do not participate in discussions about education, walk away when there is a discussion about education, avoid cooperating and helping colleagues, disconnect from professional networks, remain indifferent to professional development opportunities or move away from them."

Reasons for Quiet Quitting Behavior

Participants' opinions about the reasons for quiet quitting behavior were collected under the theme of "*system-related reasons* (f=69)". The answers given in this theme consisted of "low salaries (f=13), teachers' feeling worthless (f=12), unfair practices of school principals (f=9), inadequacies of school principals (f=7), dominance of parents and students in the education system (f=7), indifference of students and their parents (f=7), disbelief in the education system (f=7), continuous changing of education system (f=4), and political and union differences in schools (f=4)" sub-themes.

The issue most emphasized by both teachers and school administrators is *low salaries.* Regarding *low salaries* (f=13), the participants stated that "the salaries received are insufficient, their labor is not rewarded, salary increases are insufficient, purchasing power has decreased due to increasing inflation, and teachers receive the lowest salary among civil servants":

> *Many of my teacher friends at my school state that the salary adjustments are not sufficient compared to the country's economy. They state that they would not be able to make ends meet if two people in the family did not work (T5).*
>
> *By comparing their salaries or additional course fees with other professional groups, I observe that teachers in general do not perform their duties as fully and regularly as in the past (A10).*
>
> *This salary issue comes up frequently and never loses its importance in the teachers' room. When two teachers sit down, unfortunately the first issue discussed is salary. This situation of our teachers who are economically dissatisfied is reflected in the school and their productivity decreases (A1).*

One of the reasons that teachers see their salaries as low may be related to *teachers' feeling worthless* (f=12). They *think that they do not see the necessary value both in the institution they work in and in society and that they do not receive compensation for their work (T4)*. Some participants expressed the situation as follows:

Not giving the necessary importance and value to our teachers creates a serious discomfort among teachers (A1).

We are aware that a person who sees himself as worthless and therefore does not see the need to make an effort for the student, in short, who does not make sacrifices for both his life and the school, becomes a "quiet quitting" situation (T16).

My teacher friends think that no matter what they do, they do not get the value they deserve (T30).

The reason of quiet quitting stems from the teacher's belief that he/she is not valued by the administration, parents or social environment (T8).

As can be seen in the quotes, the theme of teachers' feeling worthless was emphasized more frequently by school administrators than by teachers. Since school administrators are in contact with all teachers in the school, it is easier to observe this situation in teachers.

Participants also gave an important place to the unfair practices of school principals (f=9) and the inadequacies of school principals (f=7) among the reasons for teachers' quiet quitting behavior. Participants connected these two themes to the theme of political and union differences in schools (f=4). Some participants claimed that "*school principal appointments are made according to teachers' unions and generally unqualified people are appointed as school principals*." Depending on this situation, one participant claimed that "*some school principals behave differently according to the teachers' union and act unfairly (A1)*." This situation causes some problems among teachers. One participant claimed that "*political and union differences and different ideas among teachers cause polarization among teachers (T5)*."

According to the participants, the themes of "the dominance of parents and students in the Turkish education system (f=7) and the indifference of students and their parents (f=7)" took an important place among the reasons for teachers' quiet quitting behavior. Especially teachers claimed that parents and students were given great privileges in the Turkish education system:

The policies followed by the ministry in recent times have placed teachers on the target board. The unlimited rights given to parents and students have left the teacher in the background (T3).

In a system where parent-student sovereignty is prioritized over teachers and administration, it is inevitable that teachers will consider quiet quitting (T5).

Serious parental pressure on teachers, opening investigations directly to teachers with minor complaints, parents deeming themselves entitled to all kinds of rights, behaviors sometimes extending to verbal and physical violence, and the lack of protection for teachers despite these behaviors make our teachers feel worthless (T30).

Some participants stated that *investigations were opened directly against teachers even for minor complaints (T14, T30, A2), and a complaint line was established so that teachers could be complained about (A1, A2, A4)*. Although the opinions of parents and students are highly respected in the system, there is also a significant lack of interest in students and parents (f=7). This lack of interest can cause teachers' motivation and performance to decrease. One of the issues that causes teachers' motivation and performance to decrease is related to the "continuous changing of education system (f=4)". One of the most characteristic features of the Turkish education system is that the system is constantly changing, especially in recent years, and these changes are not in certain integrity. One participant expressed this situation as follows: "*Not a day goes by without an unknown emerging. Continuous changes made to the system tire education staff (T4)*." The participant stated that the continuous change of the system makes teachers very tired and this causes quiet quitting behavior.

Depending on all these themes, there is a *significant decrease (f=7) in teachers' beliefs in the education system.* Participants expressed their opinions as follows:

> *According to my observations, I can state that no topic discussed will make a difference, whatever the topic is discussed will remain on the table, and therefore it creates a decrease or reluctance in participation (T7).*
>
> *Over the years, our teachers think that it is unnecessary to talk or express their opinions. Things in schools proceed only in line with the wishes of national education and school principals, and teachers' ideas and opinions are not taken into account (T30).*

In their statements, teachers emphasized that teachers' opinions were not taken into account in the changes within the system and that the regulations made did not lead to a change in the system.

All in all, school administrators and teachers who participated in the study have similar views regarding the quiet quitting behaviors observed in the teachers. There are no notable differences in the opinions of the participants.

DISCUSSION

This study is aimed to determine the opinions of teachers and school administrators working in public schools in Turkey regarding the quiet quitting behaviors they observed in teachers. All participants stated that they observed quiet quitting behavior in teachers and that quiet quitting behavior has increased in recent years. Özen et al. (2024) and Yılmaz (2024) also found that there is a significant quiet quitting behavior among teachers in Turkey. In Turkey, teachers may develop quiet quitting behavior as a result of increasing workloads, high performance expectations and many other variables as a result of continuous system changes, weakening of their perception of organizational justice, decreasing job satisfaction and experiencing burnout (Yücedağlar et al., 2024). Although it is claimed that quiet quitting behavior is a common behavior in Generation Z (Pandey, 2022; Yıldız, 2023), this case is not valid for the teachers in Turkey. The participants' ages were 30 and above, and these participants observed quiet quitting behavior in almost every age group.

Even though teachers working in public schools in Turkey want to resign, they do not have the courage to do so. Therefore, the quiet quitting process has become an alternative solution for people who do not or cannot leave the job (Scheyett, 2023). Since the working conditions of teachers working in public schools in Turkey are much better in terms of salary than teachers working in private schools, the majority of teachers want to work in public schools. However, there are hundreds of thousands of teachers waiting to be appointed to public schools. For this reason, teachers may turn to quiet quitting behaviors instead of resigning. If the risk of finding a similar job with higher wages and more satisfactory conditions is very high, if the probability of unemployment after dismissal is high, or if one has to give up a guaranteed pension or other rights, quiet quitting is inevitable (Pippke, 1998).

Participants viewed behaviors such as *not contributing, showing low performance, minimizing relationships and communication, low motivation, and lack of interest in professional issues and professional development* as quiet quitting behavior. When behaviors such as not contributing, showing low performance and lack of interest in professional issues and professional development are considered together, it can be said that the most important quiet quitting behavior is to fulfill the minimum requirements and not make any extra contribution. Teachers, who exhibit the behavior of not contributing as a quiet quitting behavior, generally do not make extra contributions to any subject, do not express their opinions in meetings, and do not participate in school events and meetings. Depending on these behaviors, teachers minimize their performance and limit their work only to working hours. Serenko (2024) also found similar findings in his research. Serenko (2024) examined the tendency reasons of quiet quitting through the comments of 672 Tik Tok users and determined that "employees deliberately limit their work-related activities, never volunteer for the additional tasks, and only try to maintain their current job status."

Teachers' minimization of relationships and communication with other stakeholders and therefore having low motivation emerged as another important quiet quitting behavior. Teachers who display quiet quitting behavior, in one sense, isolate themselves from the school environment by not participating in social events and *minimizing communication* with colleagues and school administration.

The decrease in motivation and professional commitment of teachers who experience quiet quitting are also given as examples of quiet quitting behavior. One of the behaviors that occur due to low motivation and low performance is the decrease in teachers' *interest in professional issues and professional development*. Teachers who experience quiet quitting behave indifferently towards educational issues and professional development activities.

According to the participants, teachers' quiet quitting behavior stems largely from the education system. Participants particularly emphasized low salaries among the reasons arising from the education system. It has also been determined in the previous studies (Arar, 2022; Atsan, 2023; Galanis et al., 2023; Gün, 2024; Serenko, 2024; Valura, 2022; Youthall, 2022) that low wages cause quiet quitting behavior. In a study, 35.8% of employees stated that they could end quiet quitting if their economic rights and salary policies were regulated (Youthall, 2022). The linear and positive relationship between wage and organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Clark & Oswald, 1996; Granger et al., 2022) also confirms this view.

The high inflation experienced in Turkey in the last 10 years has deeply affected public employees. Although civil servant salaries have been increased in line with inflation, the purchasing power of public employees has decreased significantly. Low wages and other economic problems caused teachers to experience significant financial difficulties and made them feel worthless. In Turkey, teachers have become one of the least paid groups compared to the other professional groups. In many studies (Atmaca, 2020; Bozbayındır, 2019), low salaries have been stated as an important variable among the factors that make teachers feel worthless. It has also been emphasized in the previous studies that employees' feeling worthless causes quiet quitting (Arar, 2022; Atsan, 2023; Pevec, 2023; Thekkechangarapatt, 2023).

According to the participants, the inadequacy and unfair practices of school principals also have a significant impact on teachers' feeling worthless and exhibiting quiet quitting behavior. The selection and appointment of school administrators in public schools in Turkey is entirely carried out by MoNE. Although there is a written exam in appointments, the main determinant is the interview score. It is often claimed that these interviews are not treated objectively and that there is significant favoritism towards members of certain unions (Kürkçüoğlu et al., 2013; Yılmaz, 2015). These views bring up important problems regarding the qualifications of appointed school principals. Unqualified school principals increase the quiet quitting behavior of teachers with their unfair practices and behaviors that show their inadequacy. This situation was also emphasized by the participants. In this context, participants stated that political and union differences in schools also caused quiet quitting behavior among teachers. In the Turkish education system, unions appear to be structures that stand out with their political identities, and teachers see the union-politics relationship as a problem (Avcı, 2021; Erdoğan & Güneş-Kahraman, 2016; Taşdan, 2013).

Participants also emphasized the issue of dominance of parents and students in the education system. Unfortunately, the practices implemented in the Turkish education system for the last 20 years have caused this perception. MoNE has established various complaint channels and processed the majority of complaints without reviewing them. In their speeches, MoNE administrators presented teachers as employees who work less but are paid more and take vacations for long periods of time. These negative discourses caused the teaching profession to lose reputation socially and negatively affected the status of the teaching profession in the society. Teachers have stated in many studies that they experienced a certain loss of reputation in the society (Atmaca, 2020; Ertan-Kantos, 2021; Keskin & Yüceer, 2017; Polat et al., 2015; Sunar, 2020).

According to the participants, one of the issues that cause quiet quitting is the indifference of students and their parents. Students and parents have lost their interest in the educational processes by using the unlimited rights granted to them. Participants stated that their motivation decreased due to the indifference of students and their parents, that they did not want to do extra work, and that their works did not attract attention. As a result, teachers have lost their faith in the education system. In addition to the indifference of students and their parents, teachers have lost their faith in the education system due to reasons such as the continuous changing of the education system, the opinions of teachers not being taken into account in these changes, the changes made by MoNE being made with a top-down logic, the changes not being handled within the system integrity, and the changes created new problems.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND PRACTICE

The findings indicate that there is a significant quiet quitting behavior among teachers working in public schools in Turkey. A large portion of the quiet quitting behavior observed among the teachers stems from certain problems and disruptions in the Turkish education system. The most important source of these problems and disruptions seems to be MoNE. MoNE that manages the Turkish education system, which is an extremely centralized education system, has caused a significant feeling of worthlessness in teachers through various actions and omissions. In addition, there are problems regarding the reputation of the teaching profession in Turkey. This situation was also stated by the school administrators and teachers who participated in the study. Accordingly, there is a significant decrease in the number of people who want to become teachers in Turkey. In Turkey, some undergraduate teaching programs could not fully fill their quotas in 2024 for the first time. The teaching profession in Turkey is moving away from being one of the preferred professions.

Considering that all kinds of planning related to education in the Turkish education system are made by MoNE, the precautions to solve this problem should also be taken by MoNE. MoNE should work in the direction of reducing the quiet quitting behaviors among teachers, empowering teachers, and increasing the reputation of teaching profession in the society because teachers are the most important part of the education system.

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY OF AFGHAN WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP: ASSESSING FACTORS INFLUENCING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS' CAREER SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the understanding of societal factors influencing women's leadership positions in the public sector of Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021, with a specific focus on the Independent General Directorate of Kuchis (IGDK). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven women occupying diverse positions within the governmental agency of IGDK in Afghanistan. The Glass Ceiling Theory has been used as an academic lens for this study. Moreover, thematic analysis has been applied for data analysis regarding qualitative interviews. The study resulted in several factors that had the greatest influence on women's career advancement, including organizational, social, individual, and national levels due to lack of political stability. The findings highlight the persistence of societal norms that prescribe specific roles for men and women which limit women's opportunities for advancement.

The impact of traditional gender roles and expectations, as well as education and workplace discrimination, on women's career progression, were identified as major themes of the study. Moreover, based on the findings of this study, gender disparities in education and workplace discrimination contributes to unequal pay and limited managerial employment options for women. The study aligns with existing seminal literature and offers practical measures for promoting gender equality and women's leadership, including targeted interventions to challenge traditional gender norms, equal access to quality education, workplace diversity initiatives, and policy reforms that support gender mainstreaming. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers and organizations to enhance women's leadership opportunities, emphasizing the importance of capacity building, collaboration, and long-term monitoring and evaluation. By implementing these recommendations, the public sector of Afghanistan can make significant strides toward achieving gender equality in leadership positions and fostering a more inclusive society.

INTRODUCTION

Women in leadership roles has become a significant contemporary issue and a topic of widespread interest around the globe. Extensive research has demonstrated the benefits of female and other minorities' leadership for organizations, societies, and nations (Lahti, 2013). As such, there is a growing recognition of the importance of promoting and supporting diverse women in leadership positions. This research article, focused on understanding factors that influence women's career success in the public sector organization of Afghanistan, aims to shed light on the factors that influence women's career success in the context of Afghanistan, and particularly within the Independent General Directorate of Kuchis.

Afghanistan, with its rich history, cultural heritage and strategic location, has a population of approximately 35 million, with 20.8 million men and 14.2 million women (CIA, 2019). It is expected that the female population is slightly undercounted since some tribes in rural Afghanistan do not always publicly list the names of young girls in the official government population count. However, Afghan society is deeply rooted in a patriarchal tradition where women often face significant challenges in participating in public life, politics, and business (Mujtaba, 2015). Women's power and authority have historically been overshadowed by male dominance, with societal norms relegating women to the role of homemaker (Nijat, 2015). Their basic social rights, including access to education, employment, freedom of speech and freedom of choice, have been curtailed.

The period from September 1996 to the end of 2001 represents one of the challenging chapters in Afghan women's history. During this time, the ruling government imposed a harsh interpretation of Sharia laws, depriving women of their fundamental rights and relegating them to a state of virtual invisibility (Shahrani, 2005). However, with the collapse of the Taliban regime, there emerged a sense of hope and optimism for Afghan women as the new government, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, sought to improve their rights and opportunities (Nijat & Murtazashivili, 2015). International efforts, including the Bonn agreement in December 2001, aimed to transform and rebuild Afghanistan, by promoting the inclusion of women in various spheres of society (OHCR & UNAMA, 2009).

Despite these positive developments, women in leadership positions in Afghanistan continue to face numerous challenges as can be seen from Table 1 (Global Citizen, 2023). While some progress has been made in increasing women's representation in managerial and decision-making positions, their shares in these roles remain dismally low (CSO, 2016). Studies have shown that many women in the government sector encounter obstacles and barriers on their path to senior leadership positions (Awung, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors that influence women's career success in the public sector of Afghanistan to address the barriers and create an environment that fosters gender equality and supports women's advancement.

Table 1 – The State of Inequality in Afghanistan in 2021
1. In Afghanistan, women’s income on average is less than 50% of what most men earn. 2. Women in Afghanistan are outnumbered 5 to 1 by men in higher skills sectors. 3. Women make up 4.1% of the country's senior or management ranks, as of 2021. 4. In 2017, Afghan women owned and operated only 5% of small businesses. 5. Over the past decade, in parliament, about 27% of members were females. 6. Afghanistan comes last, when compared to 156 countries, regarding economic opportunities for women. 7. In 2017, only 7 girls for every 10 boys were attending primary school, which dropped to 6 girls for every 10 boys enrolled in secondary school. During 2021 - 2024, all girls have been banned from school beyond 6th grade. 8. Female literacy is about 53% in Afghanistan, compared to 79% globally. 9. In 2015, one study concluded that 46.1% of women had been subject to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past year.
Source: Global Citizen (2023). Link: https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-ceos-of the-sp-500/

RESEARCH QUESTION

The study is guided by the following research question:
What societal factors influence Afghan women's leadership progress in public sector jobs?

This research aims to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of women in leadership positions within the IGDK to understand the societal factors that impact women's career success. This knowledge can inform policies, strategies, and interventions aimed at promoting women's empowerment, while fostering gender equity in Afghanistan's public sector organizations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership and Career Success

Career is defined as "the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person's life" (Hall, 2002, p.7). Career success, on the other hand, is understood as the achievements, promotions, accomplishments, and roles that individuals obtain throughout their career in one or more organizations.

Leadership is a crucial aspect of any society, whether in political, social or religious realms (Mujtaba, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2014). The research in this study aims to examine the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions, particularly in decision-making roles. To better comprehend the topic, it is essential to understand the concept of leadership and leaders. Leadership is a culturally bound notion that varies across time and contexts, thereby making it difficult to define comprehensively (Lahti, 2013). In general, leadership is defined as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members" (House et al., 2004, p.13). It is important to note that leadership is distinct from management (Mujtaba, 2014). While managers focus on creating stability, leaders bring about change (Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2002). Leadership encompasses three crucial aspects: individuals, goals, and influences. It is an effective measure used to achieve organizational goals (Lahti, 2013). While varying between their task and relationship orientations based on specific situations (Mujtaba, 2023), leaders can use transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire styles to influence and inspire people towards high productivity (Zareen et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership is a complex form of leadership that focuses on influencing significant changes in the attitudes and assumptions of members and building commitment to the organization's mission or objectives (Yukl, 1989). It involves elevating leaders and followers to advanced levels of motivation and morality, ultimately transforming followers into leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1994). *Transactional leadership* is characterized by a focus on rewards and punishments to motivate employees or subordinates (Bycio et al., 1995). Unlike transformational leadership, transactional leadership is more task-oriented and concerned with immediate performance (Berson et al., 2001). *Laissez-faire leadership*, also known as free-rein leadership, involves leaders entrusting full authority to their subordinates. This style of leadership is employed in organizations where trust and honesty among employees are prominent (Kanaris & Mujtaba, 2024a/b; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Laissez-faire leadership can be inappropriate when followers lack knowledge, experience, or willingness to make their own decisions (Zareen et al., 2015). The potential misuse of resources entrusted to followers is another risk associated with laissez-faire leadership.

To sum up, leadership plays a crucial role in career success. It encompasses the ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to organizational effectiveness and success using face-to-face discussions as well as asynchronous communications via online platforms (Mujtaba & Cavico, 2023; Zhong et al., 2023). Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring change and achieving organizational goals, while transactional leadership emphasizes rewards and punishments to drive performance (Mujtaba, 2014). Laissez-faire leadership entrusts authority to subordinates and is effective when followers are skilled and motivated. Each leadership style has its advantages and drawbacks, and its effectiveness depends on the organizational context and the needs of followers (Mujtaba, 2023).

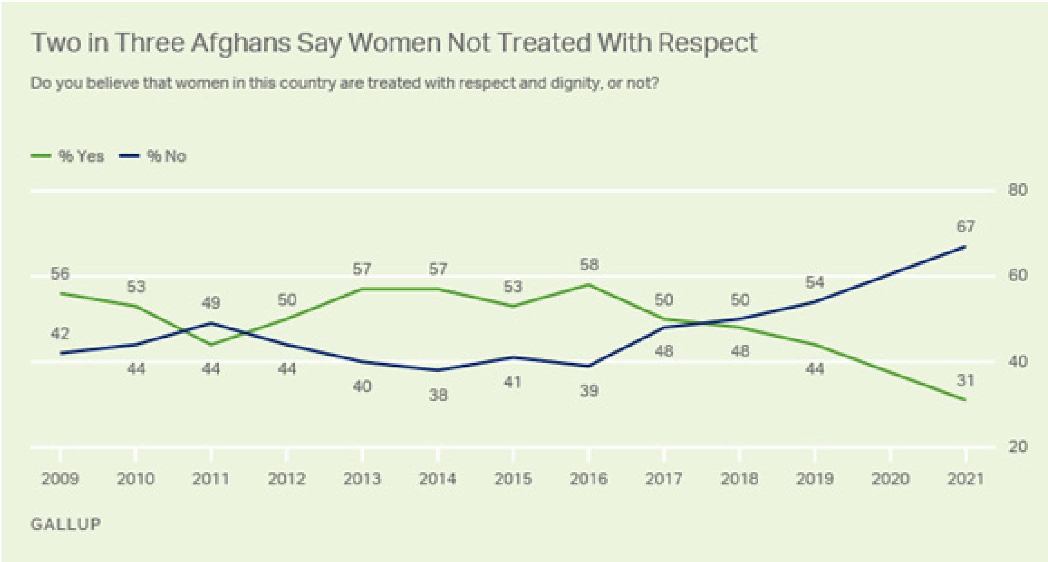
Female Leadership

Female leadership has gained extensive recognition and become a prominent topic of discussion globally. The importance of having more women in leadership roles is supported by numerous studies that highlight the advantages of female leadership for organizations, societies and countries (Lahti, 2013). Leaders must focus on the status of women leaders both at the global and national levels. A report by the International Labor Organization reveals that women have 27% fewer employment opportunities compared to men (ILO, 2015). Women face unequal access to employment opportunities on a global scale, and many end up as part-time workers either involuntarily or due to the challenge of balancing full-time work with household responsibilities.

Women encounter various challenges and significant barriers in their journey towards top management positions in organizations worldwide (Saadin et al., 2016). Despite comprising 40% of the global workforce, women are not perceived as likely as men to ascend to leadership positions and are often hindered in their advancement (Michailidis & Morphitou, 2012). With the rise in senior leadership comes more influence and respect for female professionals. However, the level of respect for women in Afghanistan showed a slight downward trend during 2017 to 2021 (see Figure 1). Recently, "Gallup surveys conducted as the Taliban completed their takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 showed the percentage of Afghans who said women in their country were treated with respect and dignity dropped to a record low of 31%" (Nusratty & Ray, 2022, para. 2).

Overall, women's leadership has emerged as a critical issue globally. Women face unequal employment opportunities and are often underrepresented in leadership roles. However, there have been positive global developments in recent years, indicating progress in women's representation in senior management positions.

Figure 1 – Afghan Women and Respect Levels



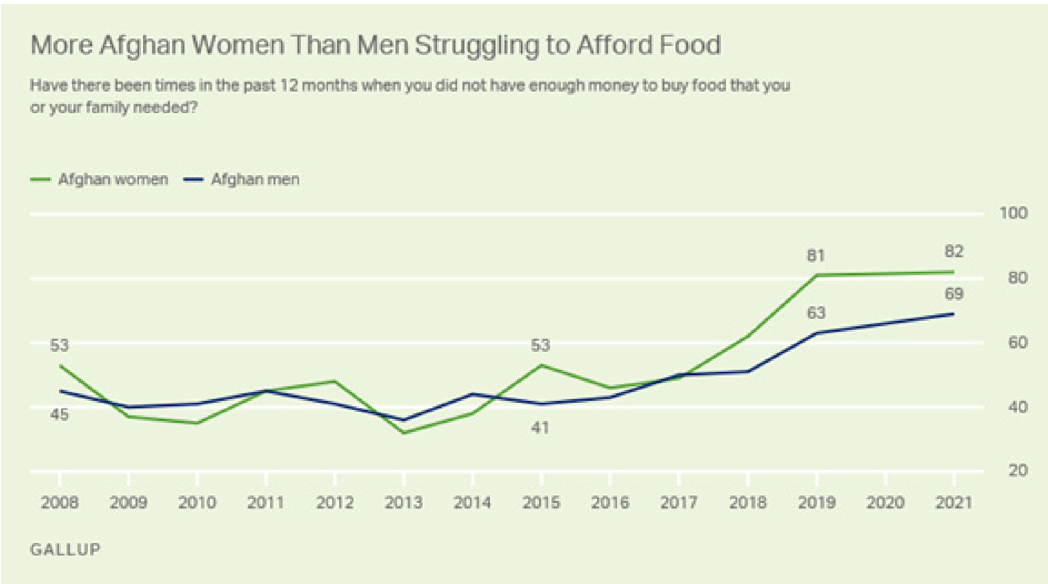
Source: (Nusratty and Ray, 2022, para. 2). Link:
https://news.gallup.com/poll/391403/afghan-women-men-women-treated-worse-taliban.aspx

The post-Taliban era in Afghanistan witnessed some improvements in the standard of living and equality for women, albeit with gradual progress and challenges (Mujtaba & Kaifi, 2010). The Taliban's rise to power in September 1996 brought about a harsh interpretation of Sharia law that severely violated women's basic rights (Shahrani, 2005). However, at the end of 2001, women's rights began to improve under the newly established government, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Nijat & Murtazashivili, 2015). There was hope and optimism among Afghan women that their situation would significantly change since females have had more economic challenges compared to their male counterparts (see Figure 2).

The Bonn Agreement, held in December 2001, aimed at the transformation, rebuilding, and development of Afghanistan (OHCR & UNAMA, 2009). This marked a turning point for Afghan women as they started to participate in the public sphere and were encouraged to take on managerial positions. During the two decades of 2001-2021, the Afghan government regularly collaborated with the international community to promote the inclusion of women in leadership roles, particularly in politics, trade, and civil society (Nijat & Murtazashivili, 2015). Notably, Habiba Sorabi became the first female governor in 2005, and, in 2009, a woman was appointed as a mayor, with three ministries being led by women in Afghanistan (Azad, 2013).

Despite these advancements, the representation of women in the Afghan workforce remained relatively low with women constituting less than 30% (CSO, 2018). The percentage of employed women experienced a slight increase from 18.5% (2011-2012) to 28.5% (2013-2014), but then dropped to 26.7% (2016-2017) in subsequent years perhaps due to continued political instability and fears of Taliban resurgence (CSO, 2018). Furthermore, of the 46.5% of women participating in the labor market, only 25% are in paid employment (I.L.O, 2018). Many Afghan women are engaged in unpaid jobs, such as childcare and household work, which deprives them of access to fundamental rights, including education and professional development. The manufacturing sector, particularly carpets and handicrafts, has a predominantly female workforce, accounting for 67.4%, followed by the agriculture sector at 67.2%. The services sector has the lowest representation of Afghan women, at 9.6% (CSO, 2018). Consequently, "Three in four Afghans in 2021 said they were struggling to afford food that they or their families needed, with similar levels found in 2019, but large gaps exist between women and men: 82% of women vs. 69% of men said there were times when they could not afford food in the past year" (Nusratty & Ray, 2022, para. 12).

Figure 2 – Male and Female Economic challenges in Afghanistan



Source: (Nusratty and Ray, 2022, para. 2). Link:
https://news.gallup.com/poll/391403/afghan-women-men-women-treated-worse-taliban.aspx

So, the post-Taliban era in Afghanistan brought some improvements for women, with increasing opportunities for leadership roles in alignment with Islamic work ethics (Raza et al., 2020; Tajaddini & Mujtaba, 2010). However, significant challenges persist, including low representation in the workforce and limited access to paid employment. Efforts are needed to address these issues and provide Afghan women with equal opportunities for advancement in various sectors of the economy.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION / FRAMEWORK

The Glass Ceiling Theory serves as the theoretical lens for the study which explores the factors and challenges that impede women's progress in the workplace and their limited representation in top leadership positions. The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that hinder women's career advancement and prevent them from reaching higher levels of organizational hierarchy (Mujtaba, 2022). Internationally, sometimes the concept of glass ceiling is referred to as the “concrete ceiling” since barriers facing women and minorities are too strong to shatter, which seems relevant for the women of Afghanistan.

At the core of the Glass Ceiling Theory (GCT) is the recognition of gender bias and stereotypes as significant contributors to the glass ceiling effect. Eagly and Karau (2002) revealed that gender biases influence the evaluation and perception of women's leadership abilities. These biases, coupled with prevailing stereotypes, associate men with agentic characteristics and women with communal characteristics. Such stereotypes create the perception that men are more suitable for leadership positions, making it challenging for women to break through the glass ceiling.

Organizational barriers also play a crucial role in perpetuating the glass ceiling. Limited access to flexible work arrangements, mentorship, and sponsorship opportunities, as well as biased performance evaluations, can hinder women's career progression. Catalyst's study (2019) on women's workplace experiences in Fortune 500 companies highlighted the lack of organizational support and systemic biases as contributing factors to the glass ceiling effect. Consequently, in 2023, about 8.2% of the chief executive officer positions are held by women in the S&P 500 firms (Catalyst, 2023)

It has been said that promotion and succession planning practices within organizations can reinforce the glass ceiling. Konrad and Kramer (2006) found that organizations with gender-neutral promotion and succession practices had more women in top leadership positions. Conversely, organizations that relied on subjective decision-making processes or informal networks tended to perpetuate the glass ceiling. The GCT also recognizes the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Women with multiple marginalized identities may face compounded effects of gender and racial discrimination, making it even more challenging to overcome the glass ceiling (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

By understanding these factors and challenges through the lens of the GCT, researchers and organizations can develop interventions and strategies to promote gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. Addressing gender biases, stereotypes, organizational barriers, promotion practices, and the intersecting effects of social identities can contribute to dismantling the glass ceiling and empowering women to achieve career success and leadership positions.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

A phenomenological research strategy was employed in this study to explore and report the meaning of individuals' lived experiences related to a specific concept or phenomenon. A research philosophy of social constructivism was adopted to recognize the significance of social norms, culture, and context in shaping knowledge. The qualitative nature of the study aligns with social constructivism as it involves participant observation, field research, and relies on the perspectives of participants to understand the phenomena being studied.

Research Participants

This study was conducted in the Independent General Directorate of Kuchis (IGDK), a publicly owned agency, with the female managers within IGDK as participants. Purposive sampling is utilized to select participants who have relevant experiences related to the phenomenon under study. The sample size consists of seven participants, determined based on the principle of information redundancy. Background information about the participants including their work experience, current job responsibilities, and education level, was provided to contextualize their perspectives.

Research Instrument

In this study, data were collected through interviews with multiple female managers working in the IGDK. The aim is to understand the participants' experiences and interpretations of factors influencing women's career success. A set of open-ended questions were developed by the researcher and were sent to three academic subject-matter experts to review for validity. The following are the questions recommended by the experts to guide the interviews for consistency in data collection:

1. Please provide information about your organization, such as number of staff, mission, and the number of men versus women in managerial positions.
2. What is your current position in the organization?
3. Were you hired by a man or woman manager?
4. Were you internally promoted into this position or hired from the outside?
5. Do you have a career mentor? If so, how have they helped you in your career?
6. What is your educational background?
7. Could you talk about your work experience?
8. What factors have had the most significant influence on your career advancements?
9. What have been the key barriers or challenges in your career so far?
10. In your opinion, what are the imperative qualities and characteristics of an effective leader?
11. Do you think women can be leaders? Why do you think they can/can't?
12. Do male and female leaders differ in their leadership style? Are there different expectations?
13. What tools and policies can be employed to bring more women into leadership positions?

Data Collection

Data collection follows a protocol that includes conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants. The interviews aim to elicit detailed responses and explore the participants' experiences. Participants' perspectives were collected through 30-50-minutes interviews in the local languages of Pashtu and Persian (Dari). The researcher conducted interviews until data saturation was achieved, and similar opinions were consistently expressed. During each interview, follow up questions were adjusted as relevant. To ensure the validity of the study, triangulation as a strategy was used throughout the research. Various sources including literature, books, published articles, survey reports, and general and contextually applicable statistics were used as references. In addition, the researchers spotlighted the latest and up to date information to ensure this study represents present day circumstances. Interviews were conducted to obtain first-hand opinions, and to assess how respondents' opinions compare to previous literature. To minimize threats to the validity of this study including respondent bias, researcher bias, and reactivity, the author gave the whole data transcription to each participant, requesting them to check the transcriptions for accuracy.

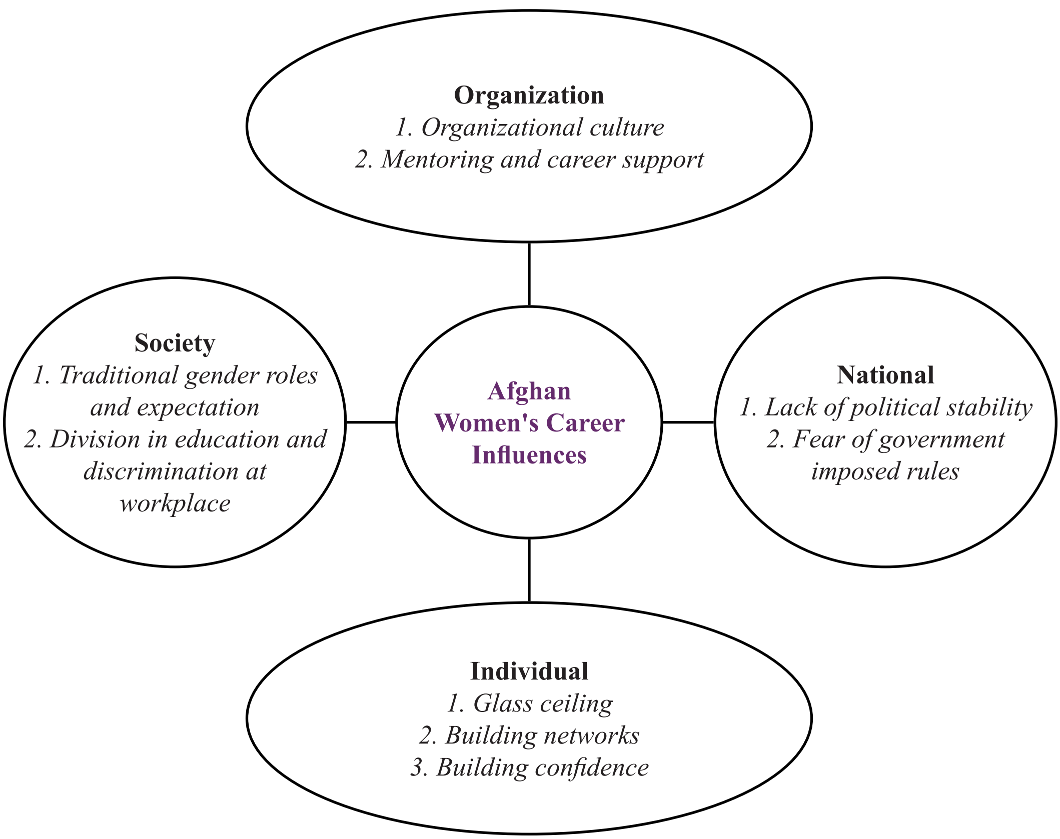
Data Analysis

The study employed an inductive thematic analysis approach to explore the societal factors influencing Afghan women's career success in leadership positions. This approach allowed data to guide the identification and development of themes. Thematic analysis is considered a suitable method for researching qualitative data related to people's perspectives, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values. It involves a rigorous examination of the data to uncover common themes, topics, ideas, and semantic patterns. In this study, the analysis process was done with the help of NVivo 12, to aid in organizing and analyzing the qualitative data. The analysis followed a 6-step process, originally outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), Stirling (2001), and Caulfield (2019) which involved systematically examining the data and identifying salient themes within the text. By employing an inductive thematic analysis approach and utilizing appropriate software and analysis techniques, the study aimed to provide insights into the societal factors affecting women's career success in leadership positions (see Appendix). Through this process, open codes were generated. A subsequent second level coding procedure was performed to group related codes into categories and major themes. The identified themes include traditional gender roles and expectations, as well as division in education and workplace discrimination.

FINDINGS

This study aimed to investigate the societal factors that impact women's career success and their ability to secure leadership positions. As a result of data analysis, several factors that had the greatest influence on Afghan women's career advancement, include organizational, social, individual, and national level political stability (Figure 3).

Figure 3 –Afghan Women’s Career Influence Factor



Traditional Gender Roles and Expectations

Participants consistently highlighted the significance of family support in their career advancement. They emphasized the encouragement and opportunities provided by their parents enabled them to pursue education and work. Participant 1 stated, "The first and most important factor in my career success was the support of my family." This familial backing played a pivotal role in shaping their professional journey.

Additionally, participants acknowledged the role of societal programs in empowering women. Participant 1 mentioned the “Promote Program”, a collaborative effort between the Government of Afghanistan and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which aimed to enhance Afghan women's leadership skills. Through this initiative, Participant 1 gained practical managerial experience, indicating the impact of external programs in facilitating career growth.

Furthermore, participants' courage and self-confidence emerged as crucial factors in overcoming societal barriers. Participant 3 expressed, "I never felt fear to face challenges, and that is what has greatly helped me achieve my career success." This personal resilience enabled females to navigate the obstacles associated with traditional gender roles and societal expectations.

Table 2 – Selective Interview Responses

#	Responses
1.	• *I think the first challenge to most of the women in Afghanistan is insecurity which has prevailed across the country.* • *Once I applied for a managerial post in one of the public organizations of the country. Though I had secured the highest marks on the written test, I was not selected for that particular post because I didn't have connections within top management. Instead, men are selected who have political ties or relationships within top management.*
2.	• *In most public organizations, men are the rulers, and they hinder the progress of women and unfortunately, there is a patriarchy in the organization, where I am currently working.* • *I'm challenging those men who think women cannot be leaders. Women can be leaders, and we can prove it in action.*
3.	• *As I face all these problems today, I do not want other women particularly those who wish to work and become leaders to face such problems tomorrow, so I will fight for them till the last breath of my life. I am fighting today so that I can pave the way for others tomorrow.* • *I think it would be better if women networked with each other first and then later they might join men's networks.*
4.	• *When I got married and came to my husband's house, I was away from school and work for a while. I later found out that they were all educated at my husband's house; I mean my husband's brothers, sisters and parents. Thus, I felt a little humiliated among them, so I decided to continue my education and fortunately I achieved my dreams.* • *When I go to work, my family, especially my husband, is very worried and he always sends me messages on the phone to make sure I am fine.*
5.	• *In comparison to men, I can say both nationally and internationally there are few women at leadership levels. Various factors have caused women to be less present at leadership levels.* • *The government of the Republic of Afghanistan has allocated a 30 percent employment quota in the public sector to women, but, unfortunately, very few government organizations have been able to fully implement this decree from the President.*
6.	• *Unless you have strong political connections or a so called Jihadi (Belongs to warlords' families) background or recommended by someone who has great influence with top management you won't get selected for any position in public organizations. I never became disappointed and disheartened; I kept fighting for my rights everywhere, until the day I got my desired job.* • *Let me mention the efforts of civil society as a good example of networking. Efforts by strong civil societies that mobilize women can play a significant role in promoting women's leadership.*

Overall, the factors that had the greatest influence on Afghan women's career advancement lied at the organizational, societal, individua and national levels. Diversity, self-courage, promoting educational choices for women, quotas for women in the public sector, and mentoring and career support were deemed to be facilitators of Afghan women's success in reaching senior management ranks in Afghanistan. Other facilitating factors included women to women networks as well as building networks with professional men in the workplace and organizations implementing equality plan.

Factors that hold women back from management ranks include the traditional gender roles and expectations, organizational culture, political instability in the country, and sometimes women's own values which heavily influence the number of female leaders in Afghanistan. However, promoting educational choices for women, setting quotas for women in the public sector, mentoring, and career support are some of the variables which help female professionals to advance in senior management ranks. Additionally, networking opportunities, inclusion, and equality plans can all be facilitators of advancement for women into management.

Division in Education and Discrimination at the Workplace

The participants recognized that division in education and discrimination within the workplace posed significant challenges to their career progression. Participant 2 described the conservative nature of Afghan society limited women's freedom and opportunities. Most participants highlighted how civil wars, and political instability hindered their education and professional development. Participant 5 shared the women's struggle to convince their family to support their participation in the Promote Program due to societal suspicion.

The participants also highlighted the prevalence of a male-dominated environment in public organizations often led to gender biases in recruitment and promotion. Participant 1 recounted an incident where despite achieving the highest marks on a written test, women were not selected for a managerial position due to a lack of connections within top management. Participant 2 acknowledged the existence of a patriarchal system within the organization, which hindered women's progress. Overcoming these challenges requires determination and resilience. Participant 2 declared, "I'm challenging those men who think women cannot be leaders. Women can be leaders, and we can prove it in action." The participants expressed their commitment to breaking gender barriers and fighting for equal opportunities.

In summary, the findings from participants' views shed light on the societal factors that influence women's career success and their access to leadership positions in Afghanistan. Traditional gender roles and expectations, along with division in education and discrimination at the workplace, were identified as significant challenges. However, participants highlighted the importance of family support, external programs, and personal resilience in overcoming these barriers. This study emphasizes the need for addressing societal norms and promoting gender equality to create an inclusive environment that fosters women's career advancement and leadership opportunities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with and are supported by existing seminal literature (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Bullough, 2008; Al-Alawi & El Naggar, 2018) on the influence of societal factors on women's career progression and leadership opportunities in a healthy manner. Our interpretation of the findings is consistent with the broader understanding of challenges facing women.

The study highlights that societal factors have a substantial impact on both organizations and individuals. It acknowledges that while organizational factors can be easily changed and have a more direct influence, individual factors are influenced by societal, organizational, and national factors. This perspective is in line with previous studies that emphasize the complex interplay between various levels of influence on women's career trajectories (Weyer, 2007; Smith et al., 2018; Bullough, 2008).

Traditional gender roles and expectations emerge as significant societal factors affecting women's leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Powell & Butterfield, 2015). These roles and expectations prescribe certain behaviors and responsibilities for men and women, thereby creating a barrier for female professionals to advance. It is noted that the Afghan society struggles to break free from traditional expectations, thereby reinforcing the notion of women's primary role as homemakers. This finding aligns with studies on gender dynamics in Afghanistan and other societies with similar cultural contexts (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2010; Kandiyoti, 2014; Mujtaba, 2015).

The study also emphasizes the division in education and workplace discrimination as societal factors impacting women's career progression. Gender-based education and labor market disparities contribute to inequality in pay and limited managerial employment opportunities for women. This observation corresponds with prior research highlighting the existence of gender segregation and disparities in educational and professional settings (World Bank, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2020). The participants' perspectives provide valuable insights into women's experiences in the Afghan society. The mention of women's doubts or lack of self-confidence as potential barriers to career advancement echoes similar findings in the literature across nations (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Additionally, the recognition of men as the primary agents of women's oppression aligns with feminist scholarship that addresses power imbalances and gender inequality (Hooks, 1984; Butler, 1990).

The participants' acknowledgment of an increase in the number of women in leadership positions over the past two decades highlights a positive trend in Afghanistan. However, it also indicates that there is still much progress to be made in achieving gender parity in leadership roles. This observation resonates with studies that recognize both the advancements made and the persistent challenges faced by women in attaining leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Catalyst, 2020 / 2023).

Moreover, this study's findings are consistent with existing literature underscoring the influence of societal factors on women's career success and leadership positions. The study corroborates previous research on the impact of traditional gender roles, division in education, and workplace discrimination on women's professional advancement. By capturing the voices and experiences of Afghan women, this study contributes to the broader understanding of women's career journeys and provides insights for future interventions and policies aimed at promoting equality in leadership roles.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The findings of this study have several practical implications for educational planning, promoting gender equality, and women's leadership in the public sector of Afghanistan. First and foremost, there is a need for targeted interventions that challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Educational campaigns and awareness programs can help shift societal perceptions and encourage a more inclusive understanding of gender roles, to highlight the value of women's contributions beyond traditional domestic responsibilities.

Addressing the division in education is crucial for breaking down barriers to women's career advancement (Noori et al., 2023). Efforts should be made to ensure equal access to quality education for both boys and girls, while promoting educational opportunities that foster skills and competencies necessary for leadership positions. Additionally, initiatives that combat workplace discrimination and promote gender diversity and inclusion should be implemented, such as implementing fair hiring practices and providing supportive work environments that empower women to thrive.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance women's leadership opportunities in the public sector of Afghanistan:

- *Policy reforms*: Policymakers should review existing policies and enact reforms that promote gender equality in leadership positions. This may include setting targets for female representation, implementing gender-responsive budgeting, and developing gender-sensitive policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women in the workplace.
- *Capacity building*: Programs and initiatives should be established to enhance the leadership skills and capabilities of women in the public sector. Training programs, mentoring, and networking opportunities can help women develop the necessary skills and confidence to pursue and excel in various management and leadership roles.
- *Gender mainstreaming*: Integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of organizational practices and decision-making processes is crucial. This includes conducting gender impact assessments, promoting equal opportunities for career advancement, and ensuring that policies and practices are free from gender biases.
- *Collaboration and networking*: Building strong networks and collaborations between government agencies, civil society organizations, and women's rights advocates is essential. By working together, diverse stakeholders can share best practices, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on initiatives that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
- *Long-term monitoring and evaluation*: Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess the progress made in advancing gender equality in leadership positions. This will enable policymakers and organizations to identify gaps, address challenges, and make informed decisions based on evidence.

By implementing these recommendations, the public sector of Afghanistan can take significant strides towards achieving gender equality in leadership positions. Creating an environment that empowers and supports women in their career advancement will not only enhance organizational effectiveness but also contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Afghan women's leadership development programs must take a gender-based approach and engage with women and men. Leadership must be learned, understood, employed, and promoted as a distinct activity from power and beyond official position due to the socially oriented definition of leadership significantly hindering the development of women's leadership roles. Women's leadership development programs should emphasize leadership-appropriate awareness and purposefulness, promote leadership as a means of mobilizing all people to meet a collective challenge, and trust power as one of the tools that leadership may use.

At the individual level, women who are eager to practice leadership need to learn self-confidence, apply it, and actively seek mentoring as well as take on the role of mentor for other women. They must consciously fight to prioritize goals, examine and see the bigger picture of society, and actively build alliances and support networks for themselves.

Civil society and the Afghan government must work together to discover and further the social, political and economic potential of women. This alliance should expand the space for and engage with women in social and economic activities as part of the workforce. The government of Afghanistan must fully implement a policy of zero tolerance of harassment of women in the workplace and in educational institutions to promote public spaces where women feel safe, comfortable, and respected.

Donors and non-government organizations (NGOs) must also support the significant role of women in different spheres. This support includes efforts to increase women's participation in public services, to strengthen civil society organizations, and to assist the government in promoting women's potential in the economic sector and increasing government revenue. Overall, all organizations must have clear and achievable gender equality programs to increase their diversity and performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH

During this study, the researchers found many factors which influence women's career success, especially their career in management. The foremost factors influencing women's career success were identified and documented. We also discussed how to promote women's leadership and why it is important. However, this issue has many fundamental factors and needs further research. There are four major areas that influence women's careers, and only the main factors within each area were examined in this study. Nevertheless, all four areas, defined as societal, organizational, individual, and national, require further research. There is great diversity between countries and cultures. However, this research predominantly focused on the Afghan context, studying only Afghan women's leadership in the public sector. To study the influence of diverse cultures on women's leadership, and how the issues surrounding women's leadership compare in other countries, additional knowledge, research and study are needed. Similarly, neither women as decision makers in politics nor women as entrepreneurs in the private sector were considered in this study. To achieve a broader view of gender equality in Afghanistan, and the power of women to influence governmental matters, it is necessary to research the position of women in politics in the public sector and women as entrepreneurs in the private sector. Finally, factors influencing men's career success were not discussed in this paper. Thus, by studying factors influencing men's career advancement, the subject becomes more relatively valuable.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of societal factors on women's leadership positions in the public sector of Afghanistan, with a specific focus on the Independent General Directorate of Kuchis. Through a systematic thematic analysis, the findings revealed the impact of traditional gender roles and expectations, as well as divisions in education and workplace discrimination, as key factors impeding women's career progression. The participants' perspectives provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by women in the Afghan society, while also acknowledging the progress made in increasing the number of women in senior leadership roles during the two decades of democracy in the country. Sadly, the glass ceiling was very apparent in democratic Afghanistan and has now become the "concrete ceiling" which is even more difficult to break.

The study aligns with existing seminal literature on the topic, highlighting the complex interplay between societal, organizational, and individual factors in shaping women's career developments. The persistence of traditional gender roles and expectations reinforces the barriers faced by women, with societal norms prescribing specific roles and responsibilities that limit their opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, the division in education and workplace discrimination perpetuate gender disparities, which lead to unequal pay and limited managerial employment options for women.

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CHALLENGES FACING FACULTY IN IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY SERVICE MISSION IN ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The study addresses the challenges Addis Ababa University faculty encounters in fulfilling their community service mission. A qualitative research method with a case study design was used. Data were collected through individual interviews with vice deans, department heads, community service professionals, and academic staff. Further review of pertinent official documents was made. The findings reveal that faculty members face different hindrances in implementing the community service mission. The difficulties are grouped into four categories: challenges related to communication, engagement and awareness; barriers involving organizational, policy and structural issues; financial and resource constraints; and setbacks in reporting and measuring the community service activities. The study also emphasizes the impact that the teaching-research-service balance has on the faculty to engage in community service. It is recommended that the university revises its community service guidelines, conducts a needs assessment before planning the activities, encourages collaboration between faculties, and identifies and addresses gaps in the organizational structure to ensure all faculty members can participate. The study underlines the importance of addressing faculty attitudes and institutional limitations in the community service mission. It emphasizes the need for collaborative action, informed tactics and continuous research in enhancing community service initiatives in higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Academics have recently seen changes in university missions in response to evolving global circumstances. These changes necessitate a new relationship between universities and society (Martin, 2002). This expanding social contract is supported by a research agenda that better addresses societal demands and a greater institutional commitment to knowledge transfer and the socioeconomic use of resources. As a result, universities have prioritized community service, community engagement, or the third mission, alongside the traditional teaching and research objectives.

Different authors define community service differently. Community service which is referred to as the third core mission of universities in its broad sense is a developing and multifaceted phenomenon linked to the social and economic mission of universities (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Community service is a general concept that covers all kinds of university activities outside academic environments (Karlsen & Larrea, 2019; Molas & Castro, 2007). For all university activities that are directed toward society, the third mission is an umbrella term (Roessler, Duong, & Hachmeister, 2015). Community service is an add-on to the first two traditional missions/activities of universities and is organized separately from teaching and conducting research (Karlsen & Larrea, 2019). In this study, community service is used as a term to emphasize the concept related to all the activities of universities toward the community.

Community service in universities is a mutual process that strengthens both the university as well as the community. Through community service missions, universities strengthen their relationship with the public to transfer knowledge and, at the same time, show their contribution to the community. The success of universities cannot be enhanced without proper engagement with the locality. Stressing the importance of community service, Jadhav and Suhalka (2016) emphasized deepened societal engagement for the endorsement of new types of teaching and research in universities.

Several perspectives have influenced our understanding of the university's community service mission. Some claim that universities directly contribute to socio-economic development by transferring knowledge to productive sectors (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Jongbloed et al., 2008). Molas and Castro (2007) and Tuunainen (2005) suggest a broader perspective on the university's role in knowledge development, application, and usage, as well as non-academic activities.

One of the most notable effects of the third mission has been the establishment of university-business collaborations as a tactic to boost technical innovation processes while facilitating institutions' access to financial resources for growing research operations. Consequently, much of the research on the university's third mission has focused on analyzing the nature of university-industry relations and their impact on both academic productivity and business performance (Manjarrés et al., 2009; Meyer & Schmoch, 1998). While this perspective is important, it fails to consider the broadness and distinctive features of the social aspect of the mission.

Thus, a much broader approach is required when analyzing community service - the third mission. Universities need to consider not only their role in economic development through their articulation with productive actors but also their impact on social development through their relationships with government and social actors (Göransson et al., 2009). Furthermore, while research has demonstrated the advantages of the community service mission, it also acknowledges that establishing such initiatives is a complex process, with several obstacles potentially hindering their integration into the academic setting and implementation (Bruneel et al., 2010; D'Este & Patel, 2007).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Notion of Community Service in Universities

Starting with the University of Bologna in Europe in 1088, the primary functions of the first generation universities were cultural conservation, preservation, and the transmission of knowledge through education (Etzkowitz, 1998). In response to the evolving needs of society and to revive classical learning, the second generation universities emerged in the 1800s with a focus on the second mission of research (Etzkowitz, 2001). The Industrial Revolution in Europe and the United States of America created a demand for specific skills and knowledge, leading universities to become contributors to social and economic capital (Breznitz & Feldman, 2012).

In Europe, John Henry Newman, who wrote the 'Idea of a University' in 1852, and Wilhelm von Humboldt are the two thought leaders who still greatly influence discussions these days about the role of the university. John Henry Newman viewed universities as independent institutions from governments, religions, and the business world. He advocated for them to be a community of thinkers, engaging in intellectual pursuits not for any external purpose (Sam & Van, 2014). Despite the requirement for such independence, evidence suggests that collaboration between corporations and universities began in Europe in the mid-late 1800s, marking the beginning of the third mission of regional outreach or engagement (Davey, 2017; Etzkowitz, 2001).

Globalization, the information economy, and changes in the financial context in which universities operate have all had a substantial impact on the academic landscape. These causes have broadened universities' missions (Pinheiro et al., 2015; Rubens, Spigarelli, Cavicchi, & Rinaldi, 2017). According to Rubens et al. (2017), the modern university can be likened to a three-legged stool, with each leg representing teaching, research and community service.

Why Community Service

Community service represents the junction of community interest as well as organizational self-interest and promotes the benefits of both the universities and external communities. On emphasizing the mutual benefits of the community and the university regarding community engagement, the Carnegie Foundation defines community–university engagement as "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39).

As external communities embrace knowledge from which universities can benefit, community service activities then provide universities with opportunities for new insights and knowledge discovery. Universities are not fair suppliers; they are too advantageous for community service (Mugabi, 2015). Fundamentally, community service lets the use of knowledge, human capital, intellectual property, and infrastructure resources of universities to help meet the needs of the government, industry, and society at large. Participating in community service activities enables universities to create and/or strengthen relationships with groups including local communities, regions, businesses, and governmental organizations, ultimately gaining more credibility and support. The community service functions of universities, together with teaching and research, help promote the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural development of communities (Adekalu, Suandi, Krauss, & Ismail, 2018).

Community service can enhance practical teaching and learning practices in universities. Active involvement of the academic staff in community service initiatives benefits teaching as it allows academic professionals to connect what they teach to contemporary societal challenges, keep course materials current, and enliven and deepen their instruction. The benefits of community service activities for academic research include the ability for academics to access new research targets, research places, and research data that would not otherwise be easily accessible, to conduct multidisciplinary research, and as a result, to expand the knowledge bases of academic fields (Beere, Votruba, & Wells, 2011; Lynton, 1995).

The alliance between universities and communities would strengthen community service as a scheme through which universities can engage with the developmental needs of communities. The most important resources a university can provide for community service-learning programs are physical, financial, and human resources. In addition, the benefits communities can derive from working in partnership with a university include access to academic expertise and knowledge (Beere et al., 2011). A mission implemented as part of university-community cooperation ought to produce some kind of benefit for the community. Community service is progressively recognized as an essential university effort to improve educational results, prevent disease, expand health care, and achieve stronger local, regional, and global financial systems (Sandmann, Williams, & Abrams, 2009).

According to Mugabi (2015) the major empirical justifications for community service missions include: the need for knowledge and integration of existing knowledge, contemporary views about knowledge, cost concerns and calls for accountability, and the need for political and financial support. Participating in community service activities can therefore help universities advance society's objectives while also bringing in assistance and funding to advance knowledge discovery, dissemination, and application (Magrath, 1999).

Community Service in African Universities

To ensure peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit towards the communities where they are located, universities need work to address questions associated with their social responsibility. Unlike in earlier times when the basic missions of universities were primarily teaching and research, currently as the interest of the local stakeholders is important to the university, modern universities have a further responsibility to render services to their host communities (Bridges et al., 2006; Jongbloed, Enders & Salerno, 2008).

Normally, “there is a dearth of studies in the African context on the third mission compared to the plethora of studies on the teaching and research missions of universities” (Nabaho et al., 2022). Regarding the start of community service missions in African universities, different authorities claim different starting times. The 1992 UNESCO conference on the development of higher education in Africa, firmly emphasizes the engagement of universities with the society.

> African higher education institutions must be closely involved in the general economic, social, and cultural development of the African society. This involvement is intended to further the service which they render to society. In their activities, higher education institutions should seek to engender confidence between themselves and the public. Far from becoming ivory towers detached from the society in which they are situated, higher educations’ institutions in Africa must be in close and constant touch with society, both through their extra-mural departments and through all those activities which can contribute towards preserving the African heritage. (UNESCO, 1963, p. 12).

According to Ajayi et al. (1996) and Mugabi (2015), in African universities, the notion of the third mission of universities, community service, started getting attention in the 1960s. Emphasizing the function of universities as a main mechanism for national development, Ajayi et al. (1996) further noted the contribution of universities to the development of the continent, as post-independence African leaders, had the idea of a developmental university that had gained currency after several African countries realized their self-rule. Meanwhile, Nabaho et al. (2022) claimed that, in African universities, the third mission has been getting renewed attention since 2000.

In the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA), university missions have their standards, of which community service mission is the one. The standard highlights service mission as one significant role universities foster in their guidelines. According to African Union Commission [AUC], 2018a:

> A higher education institution is not only responsible for teaching, learning, and research but also for serving society. The institution ensures that community engagement activities are conducted within institutional policies and strategies that facilitate collaboration between the institution and its larger communities (local, national, regional, continental, and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. p. 24.

Community service as a mission of a university, therefore, offers an ethical, reflexive, and socially responsive approach to university-community relationships with practices that aspire to both understand and be responsive to community needs, views, and expectations. The result of community service practices in universities is ultimately social capital and stronger relational partnerships among all the university’s public (Adusei, 2020).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rapid changes are taking place in all aspects of human civilization, and universities need to create ways that let themselves engage with the changing environment and meet the expectations of society. To carry out their missions well, universities must be linked to society and the local community. This is possibly done primarily through the community service mission that universities are engaged in.

This necessitates universities to align their activities with societal demands. Universities in southern, central, and eastern Africa have considerably changed their mandates from only traditional teaching and research and included the 'third mission' to actively engage in the development agenda of their countries (Kimani, 2017). Muriisa (2014) also noted that "the 'African University' today, like any other university, has clear mandates and roles: research, teaching and community service" (p. 70).

Several studies have been conducted regarding the mission of universities. In practice, the great majority of the studies focus on the teaching and research missions of universities. Existing studies regarding universities are more highly dominated by the two missions (teaching and research missions) than the third mission (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Besides, several researchers (e.g., Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Hart et al., 2009; Kezar, 2005) assert that there is a lack of research focusing on the processes by which universities establish community partnerships and how the initiatives are sustained.

Preece (2013) also indicated that there are few empirical studies on university community service practices, particularly in Africa. According to Mugabi (2015) except for a few case studies, there is a lack of research at African universities that scrutinizes the status and character of the community service mission. It is evident that all Ethiopian public universities recognize the importance of the community service mission. An assessment of the mission statements of most universities in Ethiopia reveals that, in addition to teaching and research missions, they usually aim to provide community service to respond to national needs, socio-economic transformation, and sustainable development of the country. "Regardless of their differences in resources and capacities, public and private universities have also been required to deliver quality teaching, research, and community service" (Ministry of Science and Higher Education [MOSHE], 2020, p.9).

The Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation (Proclamation No. 1152/2019) indicated that HEIs are expected to contribute to national development and poverty reduction schemes. The proclamation also states that every institution shall "undertake and encourage relevant study, research, and community services in national and local priority areas and disseminate the findings as may be appropriate; undertake, as may be necessary, joint academic and research projects with national and foreign institutions or research centers" (FDRE, 2019 p. 11451).

Though in the ministry and university documents community service was given an accent, the emphasis yet has not gotten practical support and institutionalized in the universities. Emphasizing the need for political decisions to support universities' efforts in community service, Sellamna & Gebremedhin (2015) suggest that to institutionalize community service missions, universities in Ethiopia face challenges and to tackle the challenges they must link community service activities together to staff incentives, performance evaluation systems, capacity building schemes, and the facilitation of joint learning mechanisms with stakeholders.

However, more attention is given to the two missions (teaching and research) than the community service. It is not clear why the community service is not able to get equal attention to be addressed. Specifically, the challenges related to the community service mission of higher education need to be examined. In light of this, this research examines the challenges that inhibit AAU faculties from engaging in community service mission.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two basic research questions guided this study:

1. What major challenges do faculty face in implementing the community service mission in AAU?
2. How does the teaching-research-service balance impact AAU faculty to engage in community service?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research examines the challenges faculty face in community service mission in the case of Addis Ababa University. A qualitative research methodology was employed in this study to develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon under study. A qualitative approach allows researchers to collect data in the field/natural setting through face-to-face interaction at the site where participants experience the issue/problem under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Hence, qualitative research was employed to explore participants' insights on the challenges regarding the community service mission of AAU.

A case study approach that focuses on a single case was implemented to provide an in-depth understanding of an issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Patton (2002) qualitative case studies offer an all-inclusive description, presented with any context necessary for understanding the given case. As the findings from this case can help understand community service mission challenges in other similar contexts too, an instrumental case study design was used. The instrumental case study approach focuses on using a specific case to investigate a broader issue (Stake, 2003).

Accordingly, in this study, as the country's first, and biggest university in its national impact and reputation, AAU is chosen as a case. As a pioneering institution that produces significant research and innovation, AAU has served as an inspiration to other universities in the country. As a result, the findings of this study are expected to have far-reaching implications for other similar universities, providing invaluable insights and direction. Therefore, the community service mission at AAU was purposefully selected as a case for the study. Besides, because of my familiarity with the university both as an undergraduate and postgraduate student, I also know more faculty at AAU than any other university in the country and this was an advantage to communicating with participants and facilitating easy access to data.

Research Participants

AAU has fourteen Colleges, out of which five were purposefully selected for the study because of the better community service program they offered. They were the College of Education and Behavioral Studies, the College of Law and Governance Studies, the College of Natural and Computational Sciences, the College of Social Sciences, and the College of Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture. In these five colleges, twenty faculty members, five department heads, five college research and community service associate deans, and three university-level community service professionals were invited to participate in the study. These thirty-three participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling because of their extensive knowledge and practice about community service mission.

Data Collection Methods

The data for this study were partly gathered through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the research participants. The review of official documents from the university and the college levels also helped generate supplementary data in support of the study.

Interview:

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled with research respondents at the university. Issues related to the challenges of the community service mission are the key in the interview guide. The interview questions are like: What challenges/obstacles are there concerning the implementation of community service activities? How is the faculty practicing community service mission? How do you look at the management's commitment to the community service mission? How is community service placed in the policy documents? Does that have an impact on the practice of the mission? In addition, some related unstructured probing questions were also included in the interview to get more detailed information from the research participants (Gillham, 2005). As a research approach, interviewing is typically applicable in circumstances in which researchers aspire to access “people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality” (Punch, 2005, p. 168). Accordingly, thirty-three individual interviews were conducted and audio-recorded. The interviews lasted thirty to eighty minutes and were fully transcribed, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' perspectives and experiences.

Document Review:

Important internal and external documents related to the community service mission were also reviewed to collect further information about community service policies to substantiate the data from the interview. Internal university documents include the senate legislation, the research and community service directive, the guidelines for field attachment and guiding community service, the community service frameworks, the fact sheet of community service office, and the college annual reports. External documents include the government education and training policy, and the higher education proclamations.

Data Analysis

After completing the interviews and reviewing the documents, all the acquired data were carefully transcribed and examined. Similar thoughts were organized into groups. This process led to the development of various themes and sub-themes to provide answers to the research questions. The themes were then categorized according to the data collected. Finally, the qualitative data were analyzed by using the thematic analysis method aiming for in-depth and rich descriptions of the case under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach ensured a solid understanding of the focus of analysis. Additionally, document analysis was used as a supplementary form of inquiry to retrieve needed information from the internal and external documents.

The accuracy and trustworthiness of the collected data were verified by re-listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and comparing them with the transcripts to identify any discrepancies, emphasizing overlapping or ambiguous words and clarifying them, and verifying and cross-checking the data collected through document review and interview. Peer debriefing was utilized throughout all research stages to establish validity and reliability of the study's findings, providing a sense of reassurance about the results of the study.

RESULTS

The university community service is a service rendered freely to the community without payment, and it is an expectation for all faculty members. However, as a result of data analysis, the faculty members failed to fulfill the community service mission as a core mission expected of them.

referencing the interview data of the research participants, the challenges facing AAU faculties toward engaging in their community service mission are numerous. These challenges are categorized into four major themes. These are: i) challenges related to communication, engagement, and awareness; ii) barriers involving organizational, policy, and structural issues; iii) financial and resource constraints; and iv) setbacks in reporting and measurement of the community service activities.

Major Challenges Faculty Faces in Implementing the Community Service Mission

1. Challenges related to communication, awareness, and engagement

To achieve its mission objectives, any organization must have proper communication channels between its various units, and universities are no exception. According to respondents, while the teaching and research missions of the university are well communicated, the community service mission is not well organized and communicated to the staff (RP14, RP9, RP6, and RP20). This lack of communication and awareness among faculty is a major challenge to its implementation practice.

As per one respondent (RP11) the lack of effective information flow and communication results in minimal attention given to community service activities. Another research participant also added:

> Community service is a service that is provided to the community outside the university. Meanwhile, because of the lack of awareness that can emerge from poor communication channels in and outside the university, there is limited demand from the community side. They are not aware of the community service provided by the university. (RP21)

University activities are to be communicated among internal and external stakeholders by incorporating them to get more detailed information from the research participants into plans ahead of time. On this idea, another respondent, (RP22) mentioned that for tasks to be completed, they need to be planned. However, this is not the case for community service activities. Other respondents further explained that the absence of community service activities in the department and faculty's annual plans poses a challenge to engaging in the mission (RP23, RP16, and RP28).

Staff members do not fully understand the schedules, goals, or expected outcomes for community service activities due to communication gaps. Therefore, mission implementation seems to be slow and less focused (RP18). Due to reduced communication incidences regarding community service activities, the level of cooperation among staff is also limited. Hence, the limited engagement and communication among staff leads to the diversified conception of the mission hindering the accomplishment of the mission. According to Johnson, (2020), the differing conceptualization of faculties towards community service activities is a challenge to its practice.

Respondents emphasized that communication gaps between different levels of the university hierarchy discourage faculty from participating in the community service mission of the institution and are the main obstacles to realizing the mission. To solve such issues, it is essential to strengthen communication channels, promote a collaborative culture, and ensure that the faculty understands and supports the university's community service mission. (R26, RP30)

2. Organizational structure and policy issues

The different structures within the university serve as a guide that outlines the responsibilities of each party within the institution. As highlighted by many respondents, the organizational structure of the university does not make it easy for the faculty to get involved in community service mission (RP31, RP12, and RP3). It is evident that the community service mission is concentrated at the highest level of the university structure. However, no structure at the departmental level allows academic staff to participate in community service activities. A respondent expressed his confusion as follows:

> …if the university wants to fulfill its mission, the primary internal agents responsible for carrying out the community service mission are the teachers/the faculty. Therefore, if there is no such structure at the departmental level, why does the university include community service as one of its core missions? This poses a major challenge to practicing the mission activities. (RP2)

Another respondent, (RP5) stressed the importance of organizational structure within an organization in achieving its mission. He stated that community service is not structured as other teaching and research functions. Therefore, as he added, the staff often falls short of accomplishing activities to the expected level. In response to this idea, another respondent noted:

> … because of the absence of clear guidelines on accomplishing community service mission activities, the work is being done haphazardly. If there is a clear guideline, it lets you do your work responsibly (RP27).

Molepo and Mudau (2020) pointed out that some universities do not have clear policy guidelines allowing faculty to participate in community service activities. Even among those with policies, some fail to enforce them, leading to a lack of staff compliance with the rules.

3. Financial and resource constraints

Stressing the importance of financial resources for carrying out various activities in universities, including community service, a respondent (RP4) stated that while community service activities are typically done without charging any professional fees, they still require funding to operate.

Based on feedback from several respondents, there seems to be a shortage of budget allocated to community engagement office activities for planned projects. Respondents have highlighted that expenses such as transportation fees and daily allowances are crucial for facilitating these activities.

This shortage of budget creates obstacles to implementing community service activities. Regarding the community service mission in universities, the lack of funding and infrastructure resulted in only limited fulfillment of the mission (Hikins & Cherwitz, 2010; Johnson, 2020; Marks et al., 2015).

Overlapping schedule conflicts may prevent participation in community service activities. In addition, as (RP7) pointed out, individuals may have a desire to participate in community service activities. However, according to this respondent, there are obstacles such as a lack of time to complete these activities, especially when these activities are not considered part of one's primary faculty responsibilities. Faculty struggles to prioritize community service due to teaching and research commitments (Naranjo, Vega, & Manjarres, 2023).

About this matter, respondent (RP8) pointed out that community service activities are being carried out in a disorganized manner without a formal plan and logistics. He stated that they were only reminded about these activities at the promotion times.

(RP10) also mentioned that due to financial and resource constraints, staff lacks motivation and positive attitude towards the mission in general. Adding more to this, (RP17) stated though the staff raises the issue of community service during promotion only, nothing is obligatory as far as the mission is concerned and even if the faculty is interested, there are no provisions to run community service activities.

4. Reporting and measurement

In the university policy, it is unclear who needs to participate in community service and who needs not. According to (RP15), though the university senate legislation stipulates that 12.5% of the faculty's time should be dedicated to community service mission, this guideline is not being properly implemented due to a lack of clear trajectory that measures this. (RP13) pointed out that this raises issues of accountability.

Faculties are expected to contribute to their community, and without clear measures and reporting of activities their engagement in community service is hindered. A research participant uttered:

> Community service is not scheduled like the teaching activities set by staff members. For example, the service has no specific schedule like teaching. The guidelines are not visible at the lower level. That makes it difficult to measure and report the activities. (RP1)

Obviously, there are measurement and assessment tools for the community service activities in higher education. As higher education institutions are more tied to broader audiences, consider innovative ways to quantify their societal influence. The Campus Engage Metrics and Evaluation Working Group has developed a nationwide and globally informed Metrics Framework that works within an Irish community engagement context and narrative but is equally applicable to other institutions and higher education systems throughout the world. However, many of the criteria are ambitious and not feasible to quantify over a short period (Irish Universities Association, 2018).

Koryakina, Sarrico, and Teixeira (2015) highlighted that the key challenge to embracing community service in faculty responsibilities is allied to the structure of the academic career, especially the evaluation of academic staff's work and its impact on career progression.

How Does the Teaching-Research-Service Balance Impact AAU Faculty to Engage in Community Service?

Faculty involvement with the university's three core missions (teaching, research, and community service) is greatly impacted by the weight allocated to each of these missions. There is a noticeable disparity in the distribution of the workload to each of the missions, even though the national policy documents call for faculty members to support all three goals, including community service.

In particular, the teaching mission is given precedence in the university's senate legislation (62.5%), followed by the research mission (25%), and finally community service mission (12.5%) (AAU, 2023). Several respondents stated that the excessive focus on teaching and research limits the amount of time and energy that faculty can dedicate to community service mission.

As per a participant (RP21), this disparity has a negative influence on the community service mission's resource allocation and managerial attention too. Participants argue that their poor participation stems from an institutional lack of emphasis on community service which is primarily the result of assigning minimal load to the mission. This issue is exacerbated by a lack of enough money, organizational support, and clear priorities.

In addition to the lesser allocation of workload, policy documents do not provide a clear definition or description of community service. This uncertainty has led to differing faculty interpretations, resulting in uneven mission awareness and comprehension. This is consistent with more general results in the literature, such as those stated by O'Meara (2002), who claims that community service is typically undervalued in higher education when compared to research and teaching.

Faculty attitudes and involvement in community service are greatly influenced by institutional support and emphasis. Faculty frequently interpret a management preference for teaching and research over community involvement as a sign that the institution does not value community service. As a result, they become less motivated and engage in related activities.

The lack of these organizational frameworks, according to the participants, limits community service programs' support and visibility and makes resource allocation more challenging. Without managerial support, encouragement, or a clear plan, community service initiatives struggle to thrive. The issue is further made worse by the lack of a specialized department or point of contact to oversee community service programs at the college and departmental levels. Because of this view, community service is now referred to as the "third mission" of universities, a secondary goal as opposed to a primary one.

In conclusion, the existing disparity in workload distribution, unclear policy definitions, and a lack of institutional support all contribute to the university's poor community service culture. These issues need to be addressed to encourage increased participation and ensure that community work receives the recognition and resources it deserves.

DISCUSSION

Despite differences between universities, all Ethiopian universities currently took community service as one of their core functions. It is evident that all Ethiopian public universities recognize the importance of the community service mission. An assessment of the mission statements of most universities in Ethiopia reveals that, in addition to teaching and research, they aim to provide community service to respond to national needs, socio-economic transformation, and the country's sustainable development.

To properly carry out their service missions, universities need a clear operational structure and regulatory framework that helps in establishing roles, duties, and communication channels to facilitate efficient resource allocation and coordination of community participation activities among university entities. Furthermore, strong standards for service ethics and teamwork promote an environment in which faculties can operate transparently and accountably. Without good policies, universities may encounter challenges such as resource misallocation, a lack of direction, or ethical issues, all of which can hamper goal accomplishment. Thus, a strong organizational structure, together with comprehensive policies, is essential for fostering a culture that is efficient, imaginative, and aligned with institutional goals. While explaining the enablers and barriers to community engagement in South African universities, Johnson (2020, p.101) puts “Enabling structures must also be supported by enabling policies that promote or encourage staff to become involved and support community engagement”. He also added that a significant obstacle for community engagement professionals is the lack of a clear conceptualization of community engagement, compounded by the conflicting placement of community service within university structures.

Sufficient financial resources and logistic issues are essential for the successful implementation of a university's community service mission. Community engagement activities demand significant investment to reach the targeted community in a variety of ways. Without adequate financing, universities are challenged to offer their faculty the infrastructure, materials, and skills required to engage and cooperate continually with the community.

Faculty members recognize the importance of community service to the university's mission, but in practice, they prioritize academic responsibilities over the university's third mission. This is partly due to limited resources allocated to community service. This perspective and lack of resources present significant challenges for the university in fulfilling its third mission (Rubens et al., 2017). Therefore, the lack of internal drive combined with external motivation is hindering the accomplishment of the community service mission at AAU, particularly in terms of faculty engagement.

The challenge that prevents faculty from participating in community service is the difficulty of defining and quantifying what activities qualify as community service. Although the university's policy upholds faculty engagement in community service, there is a lack of specific identified activities that would qualify. The definition of community service activities is ambiguous, and there is no consensus among respondents on what these activities entail. This ambiguity makes it challenging to measure and report on community service activities. Difficulty in measuring and defining these activities creates reporting challenges as well. Regarding this, the Council on Higher Education of South Africa stresses that as far as community service activities in universities are concerned, most universities do not have performance indicators or community engagement targets (Council on Higher Education, 2020), which is the same in the case of this study too.

IMPLICATIONS

The study has multiple implications as it provides a deeper insight into how various university stakeholders implement the community service mission. These implications include improving community service strategies based on the experiences of academic staff and officials, inspiring educational policymakers and planners to better integrate community service into higher education frameworks, and helping universities advance their engagement with local communities. Incorporating a reward structure into the planning stage to recognize staff members who excel in community service can increase faculty participation in community service. Additionally, the study contributes to the limited body of literature on the challenges faculties face while they practice their service mission in universities, laying the groundwork for future research. Finally, fostering a culture of accountability is also necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

This article examines the challenges faced by faculty members in fulfilling the community service mission at Addis Ababa University (AAU). The

university's three main missions are teaching, research, and community service. The study identifies four major categories of challenges hindering the practices of the community service mission: communication, engagement, and awareness deficiencies; organizational, policy, and structural obstacles; financial and resource limitations; and hindrances in reporting and measuring community service activities.

The study reveals that the community service mission at AAU is not being implemented to the level outlined in the institution's policy documents and the Ministry of Education. The majority of academic staff members show little interest in community service, citing weak commitment from the university's administration. As a result, the university's third mission is not being achieved.

To develop academic staff practices of the community service mission, the study suggests establishing formal communication channels between different university units, providing incentive programs and motivating staff, ensuring strong leadership support for community service initiatives, recognizing and rewarding excellence in community service activities, prioritizing accountability in the university environment, and allocating dedicated resources. The absence of a clear link or structure for the community service mission at the college/institute and department levels results in a weak commitment of faculty towards the mission. There is also a significant discrepancy between the university's policies and guidelines and how the academic community perceives it. To be effective in community service, it is recommended that the university revise its community service guidelines, conduct a needs assessment before planning the activities, encourage collaboration between faculties, and identify and address any gaps in the structure to ensure all faculty members can participate.

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF ADDIS ABABA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in private primary schools of Addis Ababa. Utilizing a descriptive correlational research design, data were collected from 226 teachers selected using simple random sampling using questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that transformational leadership is the most prevalent style, followed by transactional leadership, with laissez-faire leadership the least practiced. Teachers were found to be satisfied with coworkers and, the nature of work, but dissatisfied with fringe benefits, and pay, and uncertain about their satisfaction levels with the remaining facets of job satisfaction. There was a significant and positive correlation between transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction, a moderate correlation with transactional leadership, and a negative correlation with laissez-faire leadership. Besides, leadership styles account for 37.4% of the variation in teachers' job satisfaction. The study highlights the need for leadership development programs to enhance teachers' job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership within educational institutions, particularly school principals, plays a vital role in shaping the work environment for teachers. Wangai (2015) observed that principals as school leaders have a duty to provide a favorable working environment that would promote employees' job satisfaction through appropriate leadership behaviors. The World Bank (2015) also stated that a principal's leadership style is among the key factors affecting a teacher's job satisfaction.

Principals, as key leaders within schools, wield significant influence over the school environment, teacher morale, and overall job satisfaction (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, have been extensively studied for their impact on organizational outcomes, including employee satisfaction and performance (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 2010).

Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, inspiration, and individualized consideration, has been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction among educators (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). This style emphasizes empowering teachers, fostering a shared vision, and promoting intellectual stimulation, which can positively influence teacher motivation and commitment (Bryman, 1992). In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on contingent rewards and management by exception, which may address immediate issues but could potentially limit long-term engagement and satisfaction (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Laissez-faire leadership, on the other hand, is marked by a lack of involvement and decision-making and tends to correlate negatively with job satisfaction and organizational outcomes (Den Hartog, et.al., 2002).

Various studies showed a positive relationship between leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction (Bateh and Heyliger, 2014; Ali and Dahie, 2015; Zeleke and Obang, 2021). The principal's leadership behavior is one of the positive factors that have a direct relationship with the job satisfaction of teachers (Bogler, 2001). Teachers should get a favorable working condition and an income that can help them cover their basic needs. If conditions of such type are not conducive for them, they might be forced to leave their workplace and look for better places in terms of payment and working conditions. Such instability of teachers will have an impact on students' learning achievements. For such instability and dissatisfaction, leadership styles of principals have a significant role to play. Robina et.al (2015), showed that leadership style has a significant influence on teachers' job satisfaction.

Understanding the relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction can contribute to enhancing teachers' performance and consequently the overall quality of education. Despite the acknowledged importance of understanding the relationship between school principals' leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction, a gap exists in the current literature on the private primary school context in Ethiopia. Hence, this study tries to fill in this gap focusing on the relationships between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in private primary schools in Addis Ababa.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the Ethiopian education system, the link between leadership style and job satisfaction of teachers has been studied by different researchers. Fikadu (2018) and (Yonas, 2018) for instance discussed the presence of a remarkable correlation between leadership style and job satisfaction among teachers at Addis Ababa University. Similarly, Zeleke & Obang (2021) revealed a positive and significant relationship between the transformational leadership styles with all the nine facets of job satisfaction while the transactional leadership style had a positive but non-significant relationship.

Another study conducted by Kebede (2021) shows that servant leadership practices are highly related to overall teachers' job satisfaction. Etenesh (2018), in her study, recommended that principals should exercise appropriate leadership styles in their schools to ensure a high level of job satisfaction among teachers. The current study is different from these studies since it looks into private primary schools which were not the focus of most of these studies while the private primary schools constitute a significant segment of the educational landscape, contributing substantially to the academic growth and development of students in Addis Ababa. Besides, the specific leadership styles employed by school principals in these institutions and their direct influence on the job satisfaction levels of teachers remain underexplored. And yet, teachers migrate from Government schools to private due to their better pay but they also complain about the heavy workloads once they join these schools that affect their job motivations. The absence of tailored research within this context hinders the formulation of informed policies and practices that could enhance the educational environment for both educators and students. Hence, this study stands out by addressing the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in private primary schools in Addis Ababa. It aims to explore various leadership styles and look into the levels of job satisfaction among teachers. The study also aims to provide valuable insights that can inform educational leaders, policymakers, and administrators in fostering an environment that not only retains skilled educators but also ensures the holistic growth and success of students in private primary schools in Addis Ababa. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the dominant leadership style in private primary schools of Addis Ababa?
2. What is the current status of teachers' job satisfaction in private primary schools of Addis Ababa?
3. Is there any significant relationship between leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in private primary schools of Addis Ababa?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings from this study assist policymakers and educational institutions to design and implement leadership training programs that emphasize the importance of certain leadership styles in promoting a positive work environment and enhancing teacher satisfaction. The study also adds to the existing body of knowledge and can raise awareness among school principals about the impact of their leadership styles on teacher job satisfaction. The research has the potential to assist principals, school proprietors, and human resource managers by prompting a thoughtful reflection on their leadership styles. This reflection can contribute to the retention of employees and foster a positive reinforcement approach, aligning the efforts of staff with the successful attainment of school goals and objectives.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Leadership Theories

Several leadership theories explain the different ways people lead and manage others. These theories include; Trait theory, Behavioral theory, Situational theory, Transformational, Transactional theory, and Laissez-faire leadership theory.

The Trait theory, originating from the "Great man" concept, aimed to identify the inherent qualities and attributes possessed by notable figures in social, political, and military spheres (Northouse, 2010). This theory states that individual traits, such as personality characteristics, cognitive abilities, and interpersonal skills, are crucial in determining one's potential for leadership roles (Furnham, 2005).

Unlike trait theory, behavioral theory suggests that leadership can be learned because it is not tied to personality traits. Behavioral theory examines the actions of leaders to determine their effectiveness (Muchinsky, 1993). The theory identifies two key types of behavior: task behavior and relationship behavior (Northouse, 1997). The three most cited studies that have been simultaneously conducted in the USA are the Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio studies.

Situational leadership theory, also known as contingency theory, proposes that the effectiveness of a leader is contingent upon the situational context. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1988), different situations may require different leadership styles for optimal results. The theory suggests that there is no single best leadership style and that leaders must be flexible and adapt their approach based on the specific circumstances they are facing.

The concept of transformational leadership can be traced back to the work of J.V. Downton, who introduced the term transforming leadership in the early 1970s. However, it was Burns in 1978 that popularized the idea. The extent, to which a leader is transformational, is measured first, in terms of his influence on the followers. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader are willing to work harder than originally expected (Burns, 1978). The following are the major components of transformational leadership:

Idealized influence focuses on the followers' view of the leader in terms of charisma, self-confidence, trust, and ideas to influence his followers. It includes leading by example and making sacrifices, but this behavior may be used to manage follower impressions and gain their trust (Yukl,2002). According to Avolio and Bass (2004), idealized influence can be classified into two: idealized influence attributes and idealized influence behavior. Idealized influence attributes occur when followers identify with and follow those leaders who are trusted and seen as having a possible mission and vision. Idealized influence behavior refers to a leader's behavior that results in followers identifying with leaders and wanting to match them.

Inspirational motivation focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their full potential and exceed their expectations. Leaders employing inspirational motivation articulate a clear and compelling vision, communicate it in a way that captivates and energizes others, set high expectations, and express confidence that their followers can meet and even exceed those expectations Avolio and Bass (2004).

Intellectual stimulation is a way of getting followers to question the tried and true methods of solving problems by encouraging them to improve upon those methods. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers (Avolio and Bass, 2004).

Individualized consideration refers to the leader's ability to recognize and address the unique needs, abilities, and aspirations of each follower. Such types of leaders go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and tailor their guidance and support to the individual characteristics and developmental levels of their followers (Bass, 1985).

Transactional leadership is a leadership style that centers on the interaction or exchange between leaders and their followers. The core idea of transactional leadership lies in the comprehension of the relationship between effort and reward, addressing issues, utilizing incentives, rewards, and penalties, motivating through goal-setting and recognizing performance, as well as leveraging power to ensure followers complete assigned tasks (Burns, 1978). Subcomponents of transactional leadership encompass contingent rewards, management by exception, and laissez-faire, as outlined by Bass (1998).

Contingent reward involves the leader providing rewards to subordinates upon successful completion of a mutually agreed-upon task. Leaders, in this context, view guidance and rewards as crucial tools for motivating subordinates to effectively carry out assigned tasks (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999).

Active management by exception involves a proactive leadership approach, where leaders step in when there are deviations from established standards or expectations. This involvement includes taking corrective actions or addressing issues that may impede performance. On the other hand, Passive Management by Exception entails leaders waiting until problems reach a significant level or are brought to their attention before intervening (Bass, 1997).

The Laissez-faire leadership style involves leaders being absent when needed, not responding to requests for assistance, and avoiding the acceptance of their responsibilities (Bass, 1997).

The Concept of Job Satisfaction

Zahari and Shurbagi (2012) defined job satisfaction as a pleasant or positive emotional condition, which is described by an employee’s appreciation for his/her occupation or work experiences. Two categories of job satisfaction are distinguished: global job satisfaction, which refers to employees’ overall feelings regarding their jobs, and job-related satisfaction, which pertains to feelings concerning specific job facets, such as salary, benefits, and the quality of relationships with colleagues (Mueller & Kim, 2008).

In the field of education, many studies have been conducted on teachers’ job satisfaction. Muchinsky (1993) suggests that the cultural, functional, and historical origins of interest in job satisfaction have led to a significant volume of research on the subject. According to Ingersoll (2011), high job satisfaction resulted in a low rate of teachers leaving their professions. It was found that teachers with high job satisfaction could bring more enjoyment and motivation to both schools and students, which resulted in increased student success (Demirtas,2010)

Job satisfaction theories

The job satisfaction theories are categorized into two groups: content and process theories (Samuel, 2018). Content theories focus on the specific factors that influence an individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job. One of the most well-known content theories of job satisfaction is Maslow's hierarchy of needs, proposed by Abraham Maslow. Another prominent content theory of job satisfaction is Herzberg's two-factor theory, proposed by Frederick Herzberg. Other content theories of job satisfaction include the Need for Achievement Theory, developed by McClelland (1961). On the other hand, process theories focus on the cognitive processes that influence an individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job.

Facets of job satisfaction

This study followed Spector's model to explore teacher's job satisfaction. The model proposes the following facets of job satisfaction:

Pay- is what an employee gets against his work after fulfilling duty including all types of financial and non-financial rewards (Noe et al, 2010).

Promotion- as mentioned in Noe et al (2010) is advancement towards a higher position with more challenge, authority, and responsibility.

Fringe benefits- as mentioned in Mondy and Noe (2005), are financial and non-financial compensations. Financial compensations consist of direct (e.g. bonuses) and indirect compensation (e.g. retirement plans). Nonfinancial compensations consist of the job itself (e.g. autonomy), job environment (e.g. working conditions), and workplace flexibility (e.g. part-time work).

Contingent rewards- as mentioned in Robbins and Judge (2009), are referred to as promises and exchanges of rewards and recognition for good work.

Supervision- represents the people who are working in an organization (besides co-workers) that can affect job satisfaction (Noe et al, 2010). Supervisors with the same values, attitudes, and philosophies can improve satisfaction but become homogenous over time.

Operating procedures- are steps of finishing tasks that have to follow a certain standard based on industry regulations, provincial laws, or personal standards. It can be in the form of policies, procedures, and standards.

Co-workers- are defined as people working in an organization (besides supervisors) that can affect job satisfaction. Co-workers with the same values, attitudes, and philosophies can improve satisfaction; in addition, employees are satisfied when they are supported by their co-workers to achieve their own goals (Noe et al, 2010).

Nature of work- is defined as the variability of the given work. The job variability includes job routine, job characteristics, and job description (Lewis,2014).

Communication- is referred to as informing the current employees and job applicants of their returns on their benefits investments Noe et al (2010). Lack of communication in the workforce is a major contributor to dissatisfaction.

Relationship between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

Transformational leaders are known for their ability to inspire and motivate their followers. This style of leadership is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among employees. They tend to create a positive work environment characterized by trust, collaboration, and open communication (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Research has shown that transformational leadership is positively correlated with various aspects of job satisfaction, such as satisfaction with supervision, coworkers, and the job itself (Bass, 1990). Studies by (Abelha et al. 2018; Sayadi 2016; Wahab et al. 2014; Arumugam et al. 2019; and Gkolia et al. 2014) and others mentioned correlations between transformational leadership styles and job satisfaction.

Transactional leaders focus on the exchange of rewards and punishments to achieve organizational goals (Bass, 1990). Transactional leaders primarily motivate employees through contingent rewards, such as bonuses or recognition for achieving specific goals. While this can lead to short-term improvements in performance, it may not necessarily result in long-term job satisfaction (Bass, 1990). Research has found that transactional leadership is associated with moderate levels of job satisfaction, particularly when combined with transformational leadership behaviors (Lowe et al., 1996). Other studies (Saleem 2015, Oino and Asghar,2018; Elmazi, 2018) examined the relationship between transactional leadership styles and job satisfaction. Saleem's (2015) study found a negative relationship between transactional leadership style and teacher job satisfaction, while a study by Oino and Asghar (2018) indicated a negligible effect on job satisfaction. Similarly, a study by Elmazi (2018) found that transactional leadership style did not affect high school teachers' job satisfaction.

Studies examined the relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and job satisfaction by Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013) in secondary schools indicated a significant relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction. Studies by Munir and Iqbal (2018, and Obonyo, 2022) found a negative relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction. Based on the above discussions, this study used the following conceptual framework. The three leadership styles of transformational (with their specific components), transactional leadership style with the subcomponents (contingent reward and management by exception active or passive), and laissez-faire leadership style are related to teachers' job satisfaction as measured by the nine job satisfaction facets of pay, promotion, fringe benefits, supervision, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication-in private primary schools in the study area.

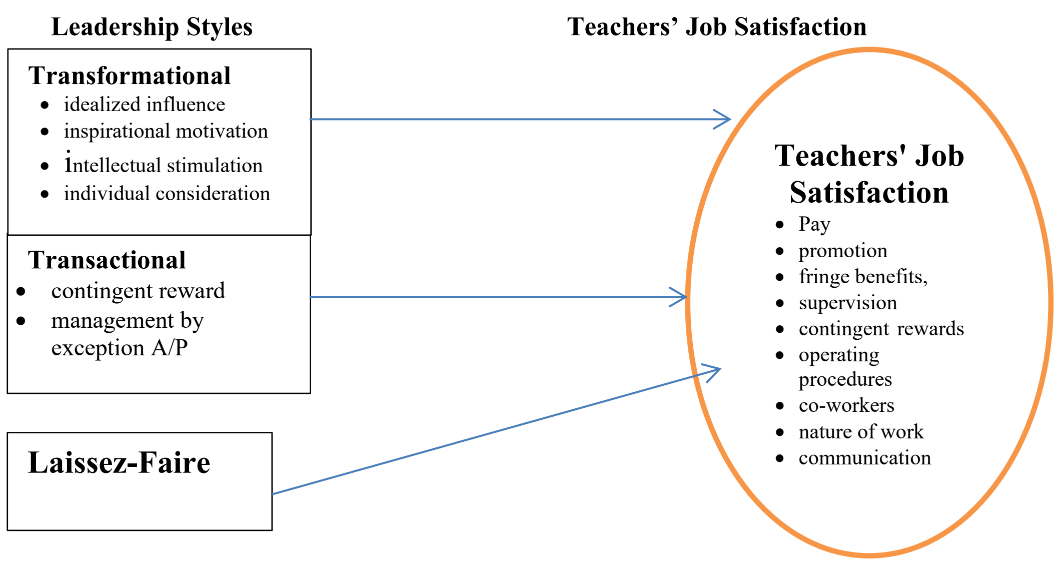

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the study

METHODOLOGY

This research followed a descriptive survey and correlational designs of a quantitative research approach. The results of the survey helped the researchers to identify the dominant leadership style and the level of job satisfaction which corresponds to the first two research questions of this study. The correlational design was useful to check if a significant relationship exists between the two variables of leadership styles and the nine dimensions of teachers' job satisfaction.

Sampling Techniques

There are 11 sub-cities in Addis Ababa City Administration and among these Lemi-Kura is the recently added sub-city that was selected as a study area. There are 68 private primary schools in the sub-city. There are 10 Weredas within the sub-city where each Woreda administers a minimum of 2 private primary schools (Wereda 3, 4, 6, and 10) and a maximum of 17 schools (Wereda 13). This study tried to include the average number of private primary schools in the area; therefore Wereda 08 (Beshale cluster) which contains 10 schools, was selected through a stratified random sampling technique as a representative sample for the study.

The sample for the study was drawn from a population of 548 teachers across ten private primary schools. Representative samples were selected using the Slovin formula for sample size determination, a sample of 231 teachers was chosen through a simple random sampling method.

$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ Where: n = Number of samples, N = Total population and e = Error tolerance (level) is (0.05)2 = 0.0025 ($e=5/100=0.05$ $e^2=0.0025$). Thus, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$

$N=548$

$e^2=0.0025$

$n = 548 / (1 + 548*0.0025)$

$n=231$

Data Gathering Tools

Questionnaires

Two standardized questionnaires were used to collect pertinent data for the study divided into three sections for respondents to complete. Part One was designed to gather demographic information, while Part Two aimed to address the first basic question of the study, focusing on teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership styles. A modified form of MLQ that assesses a Full Range of Leadership (FRL) composed of four components of transformational leadership, two components of transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership was used to collect data. Within the total of 27 questions, 15 questions correspond to transformational leadership, 9 represent transactional, and the remaining 3 represent laissez-faire leadership. All the items were rated using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The second questionnaire (Part Three) was the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), developed by Paul Spector. The JSS evaluates employees' feelings toward nine facets of job satisfaction. Each facet of job satisfaction was measured using four items, resulting in a total of 36 items. Among these, 19 items were negatively worded and were therefore reversed during scoring. The JSS typically includes statements or questions to which respondents rate their level of agreement or satisfaction using a Likert scale (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree).

Reliability

It is reported that the reliability of MLQ was above 0.80 (Bass &Riggio, 2006). Besides, the validity of the tool was also tested revealing that it is valid. Other studies revealed that the reliability of MLQ is Cronbach's alpha of >.90 (Avolio and Bass cited in Hamidifar, 2009). Spector reported the reliability of the Job Satisfaction Survey JSS as having a Cronbach's alpha (r) ranging from 0.60 to 0.82 across all subscales of job satisfaction.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics like frequency mean, standard deviation, and percentages were used to analyze the results. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) helped the researchers to observe the existence of any relationship between principal leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was used to see the model fit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Background Characteristics of Respondents

Out of the total 226 teachers,145 (64.2%) were males and 81(35.8%) were females. This indicates fewer female teachers participating in the study than expected. The age composition indicates that the highest number of respondents were young adults aged 21 to 30, followed by those in the 31 to 40 age range, suggesting that the respondent pool was relatively young. In terms of qualification, 210 (92.9%) were Bachelor's degree holders whereas 11 (4.9%) were MA/MSc degree holders and 5 (2.2%) were diploma holders. Regarding work experience, 41.2% have 1-5 years and 37.2% have 6-10 years of teaching experience while teachers with 11-15 years of experience account for 18.1%, which adds a valuable level of experience and stability to the teaching staff.

Dominant Leadership Styles in Private Primary Schools

Table 1: *Mean scores on the dimensions of Transformational Leadership style as rated by Respondents*

	Descriptive Statistics					
Transformational Leadership Dimensions	Code	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Idealized Influence (Attributed)	IIA	226	1.33	5.00	3.49	.74
Idealized Influence (Behavior)	IIB	226	1.67	5.00	3.58	.75
Inspirational Motivation	I'M	226	1.33	5.00	3.64	.87
Intellectual stimulation	IS	226	1.67	5.00	3.51	.77
Individualized consideration	IC	226	1.00	5.00	3.56	.83
Transformational Leadership	TFL	226	1.87	4.87	3.56	.65
Valid N (listwise)		226				

(Source: Own survey, May 2024)

The idealized influence (Attributed Charisma)

The Idealized Influence (Attributed) component was evaluated using three subcomponent statements where the combined mean score of these subcomponents, M = 3.49, indicates that it is practiced slightly above the average level. According to Avolio & Bass (2004) research-validated average score for idealized influence is M = 3.45, which shows idealized influence was practiced with an ideal level for effective transformational leadership. This high mean score suggests that most teachers believe their principals build trust by instilling pride in their association, reassuring them that obstacles will be overcome, and prioritizing the group's well-being over self-interest. Teachers highly regard and respect their principals, viewing them as role models. The relatively low standard deviation (SD = 0.74) indicates consistency in this positive perception across respondents.

The idealized influence (Behavior)

Idealized Influence (Behavior) is another component of transformational leadership and was assessed using three subcomponent statements with a mean rating of M = 3.58, which is higher than the research-validated average score of M = 3.45 established by Avolio & Bass (2004). This high mean value suggests that many respondents believe their principals act with integrity, identify with their staff and mission, take calculated risks, and consider ethical and moral values in their decisions. This indicates that principals actively demonstrate behaviors that instill pride and faith in their teachers. They believe that their principals inspire and motivate them toward the school's vision, effectively energizing and guiding them to align with the school's mission and vision. The consistency of these behaviors was strong, as indicated by a standard deviation of SD = 0.75.

Inspirational motivation (IM)

The overall mean score for inspirational motivation was M = 3.64, with a standard deviation of SD = 0.87, surpassing the research-validated benchmark of M = 3.45 established by Avolio & Bass (2004). All the results of the mean scores in the above table indicate that the principal's inspirational motivation skill was relatively high. This high mean score indicates that leaders are optimistic, articulate a compelling vision, and encourage teachers' creative efforts.

Intellectual stimulation (IS)

The overall mean value for the Intellectual Stimulation subcomponent was M = 3.51 with a standard deviation of SD = 0.77. This result surpasses the research-validated benchmark mean of M = 3.45 set by Avolio & Bass (2004). The findings suggest that teachers believe their principals actively stimulate and encourage innovative thinking. This enables teachers to reexamine critical assumptions, think about old problems in new ways, and approach problems from different angles.

Individualized consideration (IC)

The combined mean value for the Individualized Consideration subcomponent was M = 3.56, which is higher than the benchmark mean of M = 3.45 established by Avolio & Bass (2004). This indicates that respondents believe their principals understand and address the concerns and developmental needs of teachers, treating each individual uniquely. The mean score suggests that principals are attentive to the individual needs and development of their teachers. The standard deviation of SD = 0.83 indicates some variability in perceptions, but overall, principals are viewed positively in this aspect.

In general, the results indicate that among the five components of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation had the highest mean (M = 3.64), significantly above the average. Idealized Influence (Attributed) had the lowest mean (M = 3.49), though it still surpassed the suggested average mean by Avolio and Bass (2004) M=3.45. The aggregate mean of the five components of transformational leadership was M=3.56, SD=0.65, exceeding the research-validated average of M = 3.45 proposed by Avolio and Bass (2004). This overall high mean suggests that most teachers believe transformational leadership was practiced by their principals at above-average levels in their schools. Based on the research data, it can be concluded that school leaders were effective transformational leaders, as their mean scores exceeded this benchmark. Transformational leaders play a crucial role in motivating teachers or subordinates to achieve beyond their perceived limits. Such leaders are deeply attentive to the needs and interests of those they lead, consistently striving to help their followers reach their full potential (Bass, 1997; Northouse, 2013; Bass and Riggio, 2006).

The Level of Transactional Leadership Style Practiced by Principals

Each component of transactional leadership was also represented by three subcomponents. The presence of each component was examined, and their mean and standard deviation were presented below.

Table 2: *Mean scores on the dimensions of Transactional leadership style*

	Descriptive Statistics					
Dimension	Code	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Contingent rewards	CR	226	1.00	5.00	3.14	.88
Management by Exception (Active)	MBEA	226	1.00	5.00	2.94	1.01
Management by Exception (Passive)	MBEP	226	1.00	5.00	2.26	.98
Transactional Leadership	TSL	226	1.56	4.44	2.78	.57
Valid N (listwise)		226				
Laissez-faire Leadership **LF**		226			2.11	.89

(Source: Own survey, May 2024)

Contingent rewards (CR)

The overall mean for contingent reward was M = 3.14, SD=0.88 below the suggested average score of M =3.75 by Avolio and Bass (2004). Teachers believe they receive less reward for their performance and they do not get proportional to what they do. Principals may need to standardize their reward systems to ensure they are perceived as fair and consistent by all teachers, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction and performance.

Management by exception (Active)

The combined mean for Management by Exception passive subcomponent was M = 2.94, SD = 1.01, which is slightly above the average score of Avolio and Bass (2004) M=2.75. This means teachers believe that their principals are more concerned with addressing mistakes and errors rather than maintaining established standards. The standard deviation of SD = 1.01 indicates a high level of variability in responses, suggesting that some teachers perceive their principals as actively managing exceptions; others do not consistently see this behavior.

Management by exception (Passive)

The aggregate mean and standard deviation for Management by Exception (Passive) were M = 2.26 and SD = .98, respectively, significantly below the average of M=3.75 Avolio and Bass (2004). This implies that there was little practice of Management by Exception (Passive) leadership style. The high standard deviation SD=.98 suggests that the experience of passive management is not uniform across the school. Some teachers might rarely see their principals taking a hands-off approach, while others might find it more common.

In general, the mean score for transactional leadership (M = 2.78, SD = 0.57) shows below average level of transactional leadership practices among the principals in the schools. This score is below the ideal threshold for effective transactional leadership as proposed by Avolio and Bass (2004) M=3.42. On average, there is a slightly below-average of transactional leadership practices. The standard deviation of 0.57 indicates moderate consistency in how teachers perceive the application of transactional leadership practices of their principals.

The Practice of Laissez-faire Leadership style

The aggregate mean score for laissez-faire leadership was found to be M=2.11 (SD=0.89) which is below the level specified by Avolio and Bass (2004) M=3.5 where it was practiced below the average level in the sample schools.

The Level of Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Private Primary Schools

As data in Table 3 indicate, the mean score for coworkers was 3.82 (SD=0.80), making it the highest among all facets of job satisfaction, followed by the nature of work with a mean score of 3.79 (SD=0.87), communication with a mean score of 3.59 (SD=0.69), supervision with a mean score of 3.44 (SD=0.83), working conditions a mean score of 3.09 (SD=0.76), and contingent rewards with a mean score of 2.98 (SD=0.85), promotion had a mean score of 2.93 (SD=0.81), while the remaining facets of job satisfaction scored between 2 and 3. According to Spector (1997), these scores can be categorized into three groups: scores from 1 to 3 indicate dissatisfaction, from 3 to 4 indicate ambivalence, and from 4 to 6 indicate satisfaction (Bateh and Heyliger, 2014).

As per the data, five sub-variables fall within the ambivalent category, indicating teachers were uncertain about their satisfaction: communication, working conditions, coworkers, supervision, and nature of work. The remaining four sub-variables, fringe benefits, pay, promotion, and contingent reward had mean scores between 1 and 3, indicating dissatisfaction. The overall job satisfaction mean score was 3.23 (SD=0.65), placing it within the ambivalent range. This suggests that teachers were uncertain about their overall job satisfaction. According to Herzberg's theory, employees are satisfied with the presence of supervision, work conditions, and communication and this prevents dissatisfaction among teachers but, improving motivator factors like pay and promotion is crucial for increasing overall job satisfaction and motivation. This aligns with Herzberg's theory, where improving motivators like the nature of work and relationships with coworkers can lead to increased job satisfaction.

Table 3: *Extent of Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Primary Schools*

	Descriptive Statistics					
Dimensions	Code	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pay	P	226	1.00	5.00	2.68	.91
Promotion	PR	226	1.00	4.75	2.93	.81
Supervision	S	226	1.25	5.00	3.44	.83
Fringe benefits	FB	226	1.00	4.75	2.75	.89
Contingent reward	CONR	226	1.00	5.00	2.98	.85
Work condition	WC	226	1.00	5.00	3.09	.76
Co-workers	CW	226	1.00	5.00	3.82	.80
Nature of work	NW	226	1.00	5.00	3.79	.87
Communication	CM	226	1.00	5.00	3.59	.69
Overall Job Satisfaction	JS	226	1.61	4.83	3.23	.65
Valid N (listwise)		226				

(Source: Own survey, May 2024)

The Relationship between Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

The relationship between transformational leadership style and the facets of job satisfaction

Data from the correlation matrix indicated that the relationship between transformational leadership style and pay was medium and positive correlation and significant ($r=0.413$, $p<.01$). The relationship between transformational leadership style and promotion was a moderate positive correlation and significant ($r=0.472$, $p<.01$). The matrix also revealed a strong and significant correlation between transformational leadership style and supervision ($r=0.597$, $p<.01$), suggesting a strong and positive correlation. Furthermore, the data indicated a medium and a significant correlation between transformational leadership style and fringe benefits ($r=0.420$, $p<.01$), as perceived by the teachers. Similarly, there was a moderate and significant correlation between transformational leadership style and contingent rewards ($r=0.441$, $p<.01$), as perceived by teachers.

The correlation between transformational leadership style and working conditions was moderate and significant ($r=0.487$, $p<.01$) as perceived by the respondents. There was also a moderate and significant correlation between transformational leadership style and coworkers ($r=0.450$, $p<.01$); a moderate and significant correlation between transformational leadership style and nature of work ($r=0.423$, $p<.01$); and a moderate and significant correlation between transformational leadership style and communication ($r=0.443$, $p<.01$).

From these data, it can be concluded that there was a moderate, positive, and significant correlation between transformational leadership and the facets of job satisfaction except the correlation between transformational leadership style and supervision which was strong and significant. The presence of positive, moderate, and significant relationships between transformational leadership style and job satisfaction variables aligns with Hamidifar's (2010) findings.

The relationship between transactional leadership style and the facets of job satisfaction

The relationship between transactional leadership style and pay was very weak and not significant ($r = 0.192$) as perceived by teachers ($p > .05$). The data also shows a weak correlation between transactional leadership style and promotion ($r = 0.274$, $p > .05$). Similarly, there was a very weak yet insignificant relationship between transactional leadership style and supervision ($r = 0.137$, $p > .05$). The correlation between transactional leadership style and fringe benefits was also weak and insignificant ($r = 0.245$, $p > .05$). However, there is a weak and significant relationship between transactional leadership style and contingent rewards ($r = 0.363$, $p < .01$); and the correlation between transactional leadership style and working conditions was weak but significant ($r = 0.260$, $p < .01$). The correlation between transactional leadership style and co-workers is very weak and insignificant ($r = 0.069$, $p > .05$). There was a very weak, positive and no significant correlation between transactional leadership style and nature of work ($r = 0.085$, $p > .05$). Finally, there was a very weak but significant correlation between transactional leadership style and communication ($r = 0.173$, $p < .01$). In general, the correlation between transactional leadership style and pay, promotion, supervision, co-workers, and fringe benefits was weak positive, and significant, and significant relationship. Conversely, there was a weak but significant correlation between transactional leadership style and contingent rewards and communication. The correlation between transactional leadership style and co-workers and the nature of work is very weak and non-significant.

The relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and job satisfaction

The correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and pay ($r = -0.112$, $p < .01$), shows a very weak but significant negative correlation; promotion ($r = -0.147$, $p < .01$) shows a very weak but significant negative correlation, supervision ($r = -0.275$, $p < .01$) shows a weak but significant negative correlation, fringe benefits ($r = -0.079$, $p < .01$) shows a very weak but significant negative correlation, suggesting that laissez-faire leadership style negatively correlates with fringe benefits, contingent rewards ($r = -0.077$, $p < .01$) shows a very weak but significant correlation, working conditions ($r = -0.058$, $p > .05$), a very weak and insignificant negative correlation, co-workers ($r = -0.249$, $p < .01$), shows a weak but significant negative correlation, nature of work ($r = -0.174$, $p < .01$) a very weak but significant negative correlation, and communication ($r = -0.068$, $p < .01$) a very weak but significant negative correlation exists. In summary, the laissez-faire leadership style shows varying degrees of negative correlation with all job satisfaction facets, ranging from very weak to weak.

The Relationship between the three Leadership styles and Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Table 4: *The correlation between the three leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction*

Correlations					
		TFL	TSL	LFL	JS
TFL	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	226			
TSL	Pearson Correlation	.133*	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047			
	N	226	226		
LFL	Pearson Correlation	-.285**	.342**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	226	226	226	
JS	Pearson Correlation	.585**	.255**	-.177**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.008	
	N	226	226	226	226
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

(Source: Own survey, May 2024)

The data in Table 4 portray the correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction ($r = 0.585$, $p < .01$), as strong, strong, and positive. The correlation between transactional leadership and job satisfaction ($r = 0.255$, $p < .01$) was weak but positive, while the correlation between laissez-faire leadership and job satisfaction ($r = -0.177$, $p < .01$) was weak and negative. Overall, transformational leadership had the strongest positive correlation with job satisfaction, transactional leadership had a positive but weaker association with job satisfaction while laissez-faire leadership shows a negative correlation.

The ANOVA and Regression Analysis Results

The ANOVA and regression analysis were performed to examine the significance of the relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction and to examine the causal effects of leadership styles on job satisfaction. As shown in Table 5, the adjusted R-squared value for leadership style is 0.374, indicating that leadership styles account for 37.4% of the variation in teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 5: *Model summary of job satisfaction*

<u>Model Summary</u>

					Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.618[a]	.383	.374	.51134	.383	45.846	3	222	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), LFL, TFL, TSL

The purpose of the ANOVA table is to determine if the findings are significant and not a result of statistical errors. This is assessed by the significance value, which should be less than 0.05. According to the data in the table, the significance value is calculated as 0.00052, which is below the 0.05 threshold indicating that the regression model is significant and not influenced by statistical errors.

Table 6: *ANOVA Result for job satisfaction*

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.961	3	11.987	45.846	.000[b]
	Residual	58.046	222	.261		
	Total	94.007	225			

a. Dependent Variable: JS
b. Predictors: (Constant), LFL, TFL, TSL

Data in Table 7 illustrates how leadership styles predict employee satisfaction. For transformational leadership, the Beta coefficient is 0.528 ($p<0.05$), indicating that a one standard deviation increase in transformational leadership corresponds to a 52.8% increase in job satisfaction. For transactional leadership, the standardized Beta coefficient is 0.219 ($p<0.05$), which means that for every standard deviation increase in transactional leadership, teacher job satisfaction increases by 21.9%.

Table 7: *Coefficients for job satisfaction*

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.821	.253		3.247	.001
	TFL	.524	.057	.528	9.268	.000
	TSL	.250	.066	.219	3.778	.000
	LFL	-.064	.038	-.101	-1.682	.094

CONCLUSIONS

The research identified that transformational leadership is the most prevalent style among school principals, followed by transactional leadership, with laissez-faire leadership being the least practiced. Teachers under transformational leaders, who inspire, motivate, and foster a collaborative environment, showed higher levels of job satisfaction. In contrast, transactional leadership had a moderate positive association with job satisfaction, while laissez-faire leadership was negatively correlated, suggesting it diminishes job satisfaction.

The findings align with existing literature, such as Avolio and Bass (2004), highlighting the positive impact of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This study reinforces the critical role of transformational leadership in enhancing job satisfaction among teachers in Lemi-Kura Sub City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancing transformational leadership training in private primary schools requires a collaborative effort among school principals, management, local education authorities, professional development organizations, and policymakers. Professional development organizations can deliver tailored training, and policymakers must ensure supportive policies and standards. Together, these stakeholders can enhance leadership training, boosting teacher job satisfaction and creating a positive educational environment. Encouraging active principal engagement in training and fostering a collaborative work environment with teamwork and open communication is essential to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Future studies should expand the scope to inc lude multiple regions for broader generalizability. Moreover, longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of leadership styles on job satisfaction.

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