An Exploration of Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction Towards School Improvement in an American Curriculum School in Dubai

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Abstract

Many teachers do not find teaching to be a desirable profession due to various reasons such as low salaries, an overwhelming workload, lack of resources, cooperation between teachers and educational leaders, little prospects for professional growth, and insufficient gratitude for their efforts. The research paper has a dual interest; first, to investigate whether there is a relationship between instructional leadership, distributed leadership and teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Second, whether there is a correlation between instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and a supportive school culture and teachers' collaboration in an American school in Dubai. The study employed a mixed methods design, including two surveys (one for teachers and one for educational leaders) and semi-structured interviews with educational leaders to address the research questions. The study's key findings suggest that teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction are positively linked to instructional and distributed leadership. Also, the study indicates that instructional and distributed leadership have a positive association with supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. The study may inform about the importance of creating a supportive school culture and promoting teachers' collaboration to produce better results. The study has some limitations; one of the limitations is the lack of sample size due to the time constraints that I faced; hence, this research may not represent the entire population. Future research should examine multiple schools in the United Arab Emirates to obtain accurate findings and ensure that the results are representative of the population.

Keywords: instructional leadership, distributed leadership, teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

School leadership plays a significant role in enhancing and maximising a school's performance (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012). The expectations of school leadership are constantly evolving as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) seeks to improve its educational system in order to meet the needs of modern-day society. Consequently, due to the increasing responsibilities that school principals are facing, along with the accountability-driven context in which they operate, educational leadership is currently under the spotlight (Daniels, Hondeghem, & Dochy, 2019). Indeed, it is becoming more widely acknowledged that school leaders have demanding and challenging tasks that are significantly different from what occurs in the classroom (Bush, 2013). For instance, managing financial, physical, and human resources is of primary concern to school leaders, and the onus of realizing the school's vision, growth, and improvement is upon them (Nidoo, 2019). As for administrators, they constantly switch between leadership and management responsibilities while managing day-to-day operational issues (ibid). According to Odhiambo & Hii (2012), schools that positively impact student learning are run by leaders who contribute significantly to the effectiveness of instructional strategies that enhance student outcomes.

1.2 Rationale

Although the role of teachers is undoubtedly significant to student success, the issue of whether teachers are legitimately satisfied with their place of work is frequently ignored (Liang & Akiba, 2017). Meanwhile, the implications of teacher work satisfaction are numerous and far-reaching. First, satisfied teachers are less vulnerable to stress and burnout; thus, it boosts teacher well-being (Toropova, Myrberg, & Johansson, 2021). Second, students receive better learning support and higher-quality instruction from teachers who are content (Kunter et al., 2013). Finally, satisfied teachers exhibit greater career commitment and are less likely to quit their jobs, especially at times when teacher turnover is significantly high (ibid). Research suggests that school leadership also affects teachers' dedication to their careers and attitudes toward their

profession (Baptiste, 2019). To encourage support for students, teachers, and the entire school community, it is essential to cultivate a positive leadership attitude (Gibson et al., 2018). By establishing high standards, creating a culture that serves teachers' self-interests, and fostering a shared vision, teachers will be encouraged to think creatively and innovatively without fear of punishment, which may lead to greater job satisfaction (Alzoraiki, Rahman, & Mutalib, 2018). Ultimately, the main inspiration behind this essay and my rationale for pursuing this topic are to build upon the findings of a study titled "*The Effect of Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership on Teacher Self-efficacy and Job Satisfaction*" (Liu, Bellibas, & Gümüş, 2021, p. 430). The authors of that paper conducted a multi-country study, and when discussing the limitations of their research, they proposed that future studies should concentrate on specific contexts. In this paper, I will focus solely on the UAE context to answer the research questions. It will begin with a review of the significant previously published research.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Are teachers genuinely respected as professionals in the UAE workforce? Does the existing education system provide adequate room for teachers to perform like real professionals? Perhaps not. Teachers must meet very high expectations set by the school system, such as teaching approaches, child development, classroom management, administration, and even backgrounds in psychology. According to TALIS results (2018), only 26% of teachers believe that society values their efforts, despite the huge responsibility placed upon them. Therefore, 50% of teachers do not find teaching appealing as a career choice (OECD, 2018). There may be various causes for this perception, such as low salaries, an overwhelming workload, lack of resources and support, little prospects for professional growth, and insufficient gratitude for their efforts. Moreover, a collaborative and open communication culture may not be fostered by school leaders as almost every decision comes from the top-down rather than from the bottom-up. In fact, 90% of teachers claim they are not consulted on curriculum development or school policy decisions, and this has a negative impact on their job satisfaction and self-efficacy (ibid). Considering these issues, my study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between principal leadership models (instructional and distributed) and teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy, while considering two variables: supportive school culture and teachers' collaboration in the UAE context.

1.4 Research Purpose and Questions

The aim of this study is as follows; first, to explore whether there is a relationship between instructional leadership and distributed leadership and teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Second, whether there is a correlation between the leadership models (instructional and distributed) and a supportive school culture and teachers' collaboration in an American school in Dubai, UAE.

1. Is there a relationship between instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction in the UAE?

2. What is the correlation between instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and a supportive school culture and teachers' collaboration in the UAE?

1.5 Significance of the Study

There is a body of research, which has paid a lot of attention to two crucial aspects of teacher-related factors, namely teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy (Liu, Bellibas, & Gümüş, 2021). However, this paper is significant as little research has been conducted to determine the effect of instructional and distributed leadership on teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy in the UAE, specifically the Dubai context. This paper may be beneficial for school leaders and teachers in Dubai as it is crucial to emphasise the significance of investigating teacher job satisfaction and efficacy in educational research.

2. Literature Review

This section of the paper includes both theoretical and conceptual frameworks relevant to the research questions; furthermore, related studies are critically reviewed.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Michael Fullan and Quinn's concept of coherent school leadership (2016)

Coherent leadership is an approach to leadership created by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn to create a sense of coherence within an organization or system and to ensure that everyone cooperates jointly toward a shared goal. According to Fullan and Quinn, coherence leadership comprises four essential elements (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019) (*see* Figure 1).

Figure 1. Coherence Leadership Model

1. Focusing on direction: establishing a clear vision and goals and conveying them in a way that inspires others to work toward that vision.

2. Cultivating collaborative cultures: creating an atmosphere that values and supports everyone, promotes cooperation and teamwork.

3. Deepening learning: fostering an environment where everyone is dedicated to learning and improving.

4. Securing accountability: establishing procedures for monitoring development and ensuring that everyone is held responsible for their actions. This includes setting clear objectives, establishing performance goals, and providing feedback and assistance to improve.

The success of the organization (i.e. school) as a whole can be supported by leaders concentrating on these four essential elements to develop a culture of accountability, learning, and cooperation.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Instructional leadership:

The instructional leadership model refers to the behaviors and practices of principals in school settings that aim to improve teaching and learning (Bellibaş, Gümüş, & Liu, 2021). An effective instructional leader monitors and evaluates the performance of teachers according to the school's vision and goals, providing feedback to help them improve their teaching techniques and strategies. Moreover, instructional leaders must create a positive school culture that promotes academic achievement and equip teachers with the resources and support they should provide meaningful instruction. This includes establishing clear objectives, employing contemporary teaching approaches, keeping track of students' progress, and providing teachers with continual professional development (Liu, Bellibaş, & Gümüş, 2021).

Distributed leadership:

Distributed leadership involves delegating responsibility for decision-making among team members rather than placing it all in the hands of one person or position. This leadership style is seen as a joint and collaborative process in which many people contribute their skills, knowledge and experience to accomplish shared objectives (Harris, 2009). Distributing leadership roles allows organizations (such as schools) to take advantage of the various perspectives and skills of their individuals. This creates more opportunities for improvement and fosters an inclusive work environment (ibid).

Teacher self-efficacy:

Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence in their capacity to successfully instruct and shape student learning (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). It refers to teachers' self-assurance in their abilities to efficiently plan, perform and evaluate educational activities that enhance student learning. Teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy are more likely to be efficient in their instructional practices and are more satisfied with their jobs even when they face challenges.

Teacher job satisfaction:

Although the literature has paid a lot of attention to the concept of job satisfaction, there is no agreed-upon definition of it

among scholars (Liu, Bellibas, & Gümüs, 2021). According to the literature, teacher job satisfaction primarily includes both affective and cognitive perspectives. Job satisfaction from an affective perspective is characterized by positive emotions that arise from an individual's assessment of their experience. However, job satisfaction from a cognitive perspective depends on the teacher's perceptions of the job, such as the level of autonomy, workload, and opportunities for development.

Supportive school culture and teacher collaboration:

A supportive school culture is a welcoming atmosphere where all stakeholders feel supported, appreciated, and respected. To foster a supportive school culture, students, teachers, and other stakeholders can build trust and rapport amongst one another by being encouraged to communicate openly. This can have a transitive effect, in which teachers have a greater sense of belonging, students are more likely to be engaged in their studies, and ultimately students are better positioned to succeed academically. In teacher collaboration, teachers cooperate with one another to enhance their instruction and boost student learning (Olsen & Huang, 2019). For instance, joint lesson planning, exchanging resources and ideas, providing feedback, and assisting each other. Effective collaboration enables teachers to build upon each other's strengths, which improves student achievement.

2.3 Relevant Studies

The main inspiration for my research is the study titled "*The Effect of Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership on Teacher Self - efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Mediating Roles of Supportive School Culture and Teacher Collaboration*" (Liu, Bellibas, & Gümüs, 2021 P.430-453). This team of researchers investigated the direct effects of instructional and distributed leadership on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Also, indirect effects via mediators of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. The structural equation model (SEM) was implemented to investigate whether there are any correlations between the variables using data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2013). The findings imply that instructional and distributed leadership are positively correlated with teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy, and that distributed leadership has both direct and indirect effects on these results. Meanwhile, collaborative teacher practices and supportive school culture have a mediating effect on the indirect relationship between instructional leadership and teacher job satisfaction. In their article, there were five relevant variables, which are now discussed below.

2.3.1 Instructional Leadership

School leaders face numerous demands; Dahiru & Gbolahan (2022) asserted that leadership is connected to numerous educational practices such as developing the school's vision and mission, ensuring that the school has a well-designed curriculum, creating a school culture that values innovation and enhancing teaching and learning, providing the necessary resources to facilitate learning, efficient assessment plans to monitor teacher and student performance, and building partnerships of cooperation with and amongst teachers. Thus, educational leaders have a tremendous responsibility in enhancing the quality of education in schools (Anselmus Dami et al., 2022). Having said that, instructional leadership has its challenges (ibid). For example, Horng et al., (2009 in Anselmus Dami et al., 2022) revealed through an observational study that principals have limited time for leading educational leadership; instead, they spend most of their time managing administrative tasks. Moreover, another study conducted by Hallinger & Murphy (2013) found that there are limitations in principals' time, confidence, and capacity to fulfill this role as they are often under significant pressure to meet several expectations. While the conventional perception of instructional leadership has been viewed as a top-down model in which the principal has the authority and power to lead the school, recent research argues that schools should adopt co-instructional leadership in which every individual should be responsible and play a critical role in the instructional success (Abonyi et al., 2024). As a result, this approach may foster a more encouraging and supportive learning environment for all parties.

2.3.2 Distributed Leadership

Recent studies have conclusively demonstrated the importance of school leadership for both school improvement and student success. However, discussions about the nature and leadership practice continue to be a priority for researchers. Although conventional views of leadership dispute the notion that teachers can also function as leaders, researchers argued that new leadership strategies are required to confront the complexity of schools (Bektaş, Kılınç, & Gümüş, 2022). This is because the traditional methods of school leadership failed to meet the needs of schools. Therefore, distributed leadership has emerged and become more common within educational policy. From a distributed perspective, leadership is more closely associated with practice than with the traditional tasks assigned by the school principal (Liu, Bellibas, & Gu̇mu̇ṡ, 2021). This suggests that leadership practice depends on collaboration among school members and emphasizes the concept that teachers are in fact leaders, and engage with the schools' overall mission and vision. For instance, Action Leadership Projects in America encourage distributed leadership and teacher leadership as collaborative decision-making practices (Hickey, Flaherty, & McNamara, 2022). Hence, this model of leadership has a high potential for enhancing student learning and achievement.

2.3.3 Teacher Self-efficacy

The concept of teacher self-efficacy is the confidence that teachers have in their skills to organize, plan, and conduct activities that will produce better results (Liu, Li, & Huang, 2022). According to Mojavezi & Tamiz (2012), highly effective teachers typically have better organizational skills, demonstrate various methods to instruct, question, explain, and give feedback to pupils who are struggling, and keep students focused. Hence, teachers care most about their pupils and do their best for them when they feel confident in their abilities and are highly motivated by their work (Engin, 2020). In contrast, teachers with low efficacy are more controlling and enraged by inappropriate behavior and find it difficult to keep students engaged in the learning process.

2.3.4 Teacher Job Satisfaction

An individual's job satisfaction can be described as their affective orientation toward the job they do, as well as their feelings and attitudes toward it (Kasalak & Dagyar, 2020). Throughout one's career, individuals are exposed to various positive and negative experiences. Additionally, their attitudes toward their job are affected by the attitude of others around them. According to Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017), there is a significant relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and work-related burnout. A lack of job satisfaction is associated with depression and burnout, which lead to a desire to leave the workplace and undervalue their work experience (Zang et al., 2022). On the other hand, teacher job satisfaction is achieved when they feel valued, they feel appreciated, they are involved in a meaningful working experience, and their expectations are matched by their reality (Vettori et al., 2022).

2.3.5 Supportive School Culture and Teacher Collaboration

Good leadership practices are crucial for creating a positive school culture and effective teacher collaboration. According to research, effective educational leaders foster an environment of mutual respect, open communication, and trust that motivates teachers to work together and pursue ongoing professional growth (Forte & Flores, 2014). It has been argued that leaders who put their teachers' needs first and provide them with opportunities to learn and grow together have a positive impact on teacher job satisfaction and retention rates. Furthermore, teachers play a vital role in developing a positive school culture and encouraging productive teamwork. It has been suggested that teachers who have a positive attitude, are willing to share their knowledge, and support others can promote a sense of trust and belonging within their school (Ashley, 2017). However, leaders who are bureaucratic and autocratic decision-makers and provide excessive workload led to teacher turnover (Polatcan, 2020). School leaders who encourage teamwork interaction and delegate meaningful tasks can reduce teacher turnover rates (Tekingündüz, Kurtuldu, & Eğilmez, 2016). Therefore, leaders should take teachers' needs into consideration by encouraging effective communication and collaboration and providing adequate resources for professional development.

2.4 Research Gap

Ultimately, the literature review includes five major themes: (a) instructional leadership, (b) distributed leadership, (c) teacher self-efficacy, (d) teacher job satisfaction, (e) supportive school culture, and teacher collaboration. According to Liu, Bellibas, & Gümus (2021), research on the effects of distributed and instructional leadership on teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy is quite limited. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the indirect effects of mediation variables such as supportive school culture and teacher collaboration on the association between two leadership models (instructional and distributed) and teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction (ibid). In their study, the survey was used as a tool to collect data, and thus a huge dataset was collected. Thus, I aim to contribute to the existing body of literature by conducting a case study of an American school in Dubai to see whether the findings of Liu, Bellibas, & Gümüs (2021) are generalizable to the UAE context.

3. Methodology

The research questions for this paper were

1. Is there a relationship between instructional, distributed leadership and teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction in the UAE?

2. What is the correlation between instructional, distributed leadership and a supportive school culture and teachers' collaboration in the UAE?

3.1 Research Paradigm & Design

This study adopted a case study approach within a mixed methods research design. This approach enabled the researcher to gather and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data, integrate the findings, and draw conclusions. The mixed methods design was chosen because it allows for a richer, more trustworthy, and deeper understanding of the phenomenon than a single research method could provide (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). According to Doyle, Brady, and Byrne (2009), mixed methods research involves combining data and insights from various methodologies to enhance the quality

of the study. The pragmatic research paradigm underpins this approach, emphasizing the principle of 'what works' in addressing the research questions. This paradigm permits flexibility in using different methods such as surveys, interviews, and experiments, which helps produce robust results and improve the overall quality of the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

3.2 Sample Size and Technique

The sample for this research was selected using a nonprobability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling. This approach was appropriate because the study targeted a specific group within the researcher's context and did not aim to represent a wider population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). Maximum variation purposive sampling was employed to capture diverse perspectives from participants of different nationalities, backgrounds, and educational stages. The participants included 75 teachers (61 female and 14 male) and 5 educational leaders from an American school in Dubai. The educational leaders comprised 1 principal, 1 vice principal, and 3 assistant principals. These participants were drawn from various educational stages, including kindergarten (KG), primary, middle, and secondary levels. This diverse selection ensured a comprehensive understanding of the context and the phenomenon under investigation.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

To answer the research questions, data were collected using two surveys and semi-structured interviews. Surveys were utilized as part of the quantitative component of this mixed methods research because they help establish meaningful correlations between variables (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). All survey questions were adapted from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014).

The teachers' survey was created using Google Forms and included 39 questions designed to capture their perspectives on leadership, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and collaboration. Similarly, the educational leaders' survey consisted of 13 questions, also administered via Google Forms. For the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the educational leaders. These interviews aimed to explore their perspectives in greater depth. To align with the survey questions, the interview questions were reworded into open-ended formats, enabling participants to elaborate on each topic (Kallio et al., 2016). Great care was taken to ensure the interview questions were clear, non-threatening, and unbiased to facilitate honest and insightful responses.

3.4 Data Analysis Strategy

The collected data were analyzed using distinct strategies for the qualitative and quantitative components of the study.

For the qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis was conducted manually. The process began with transcribing the interview data in full to become familiar with the content. The data were then divided into smaller, meaningful parts to generate initial codes. All excerpts associated with each code were organized to facilitate a deeper understanding. Finally, the codes were grouped into broader themes to identify patterns and insights.

For the quantitative data obtained from the surveys, descriptive statistics were used to analyse and summarise the dataset. Jamovi, a statistical software, was employed to produce visual charts and cross-references, enabling the researcher to examine relationships between variables effectively. The combination of these analytical techniques provided a comprehensive understanding of the research questions, ensuring that the study's findings were both robust and meaningful.

Table 1. Research design of the study

Research Questions	Approach	Instrument	Participants	Data analysis	Leadership Model
1. Is there a relationship between instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction in the UAE?	Mixed Methods	(1) Teacher survey. (2) Leaders' surveys (3) Leaders' interview	75 Teachers 5 Educational leaders	Descriptive statistics Thematic analysis	The distributed leadership survey for teachers. Instructional leadership for leaders' survey and interview
2. What is the correlation between instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and a supportive school culture and teachers' collaboration in the UAE?	Mixed Methods	(1) Teacher survey. (2) Leaders' survey (3) Leaders' interview	75 Teachers 5 Educational leaders	Descriptive statistics Thematic analysis	The distributed leadership survey for teachers. Instructional leadership for leaders' survey and interview

3.5 Validity & Reliability

As suggested by several scholars, I considered procedures and strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the current research. Essentially, validity refers to whether a measuring instrument is able to measure what it is meant to measure and how well it performs its function (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). The validity of the quantitative data was tested through various means, including the use of a survey tool proven in previous research. The adopted questionnaire was based on a survey (OECD, 2014) that had been tested, deemed valid, and conducted in multi-country (32 countries) within 6045 schools, and administered to 104,358 respondents (teachers) by Liu, Bellibas, & Gümüş (2021). Moreover, I conducted a pilot study of the instruments at an American school in Dubai with a couple of teachers to ensure that the questions were clearly defined, understandable, and presented in a comprehensible manner. As for reliability, Cronbach's alpha was implemented to assess internal consistency because it is commonly used in surveys with multiple likert questions to form a scale. For the Educational Leaders' survey, the Cronbach's alpha was (a = 0.77), which indicates good internal consistency reliability. As for the teachers' survey, the Cronbach's alpha was (a = 0.89), which indicates very good internal consistency reliability.

Table 2. Chronbach alpha for educational leaders' survey

Scale Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's α
scale	0.775

Table 3. Chronbach alpha for teachers' survey

Scale Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's α
scale	0.890

3.6 Credibility & Trustworthiness

In an effort to enhance the credibility of the study, I used the following techniques: a mixed-methods design was employed to enhance the credibility of the results by comparing information obtained from different data collection methods (Bamberger, 2012). Also, data trustworthiness was verified by reviewing the participants' responses (member-check).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

According to the consent letter, participants were informed (a) about the purpose of the study, (b) the right to withdraw at any time without explanation, (c) assurances that participants identity would remain confidential, and (d) that more information would be available upon request.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Survey Results

The results of the survey are extensive. In this section of the paper, I am only going to present a sample of results that are relevant to the research questions.

4.1.1 Teacher Survey Results

In relation to research question 1, these charts present the relationship between 'Distributed leadership' and 'teacher self-efficacy.' Q39 states "This school has a culture of shared responsibility for school issues". I correlated this question with three variables related to self-efficacy, and the results suggest there is a strong positive relationship.

- *Q39 with Q5 - Efficacy in classroom management*
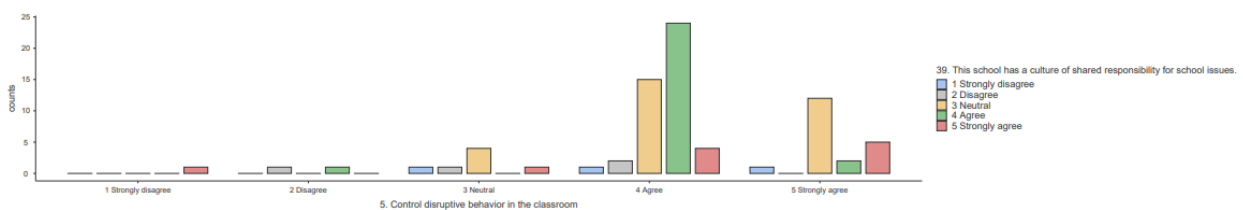
- *Q39 with Q12 - Efficacy in instruction*
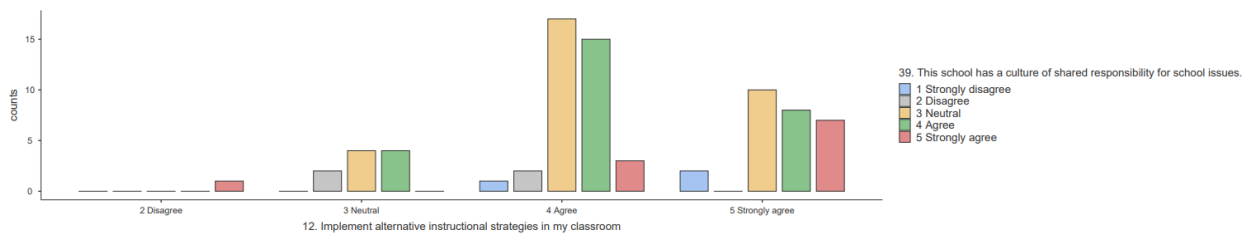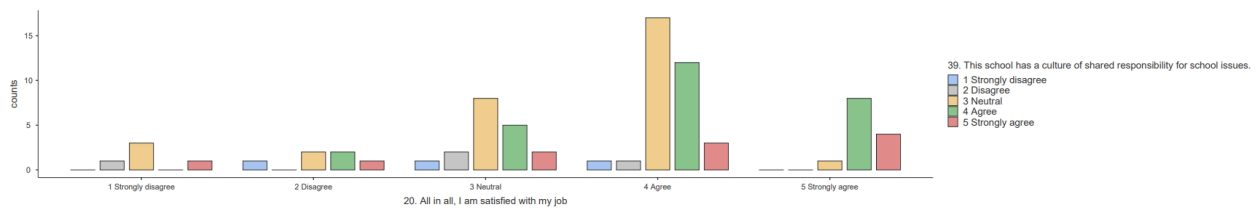
- *Q39 with Q16 - Efficacy in student engagement*
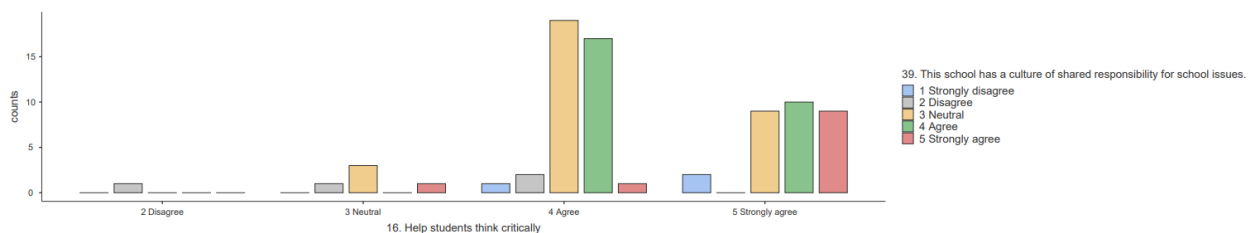
Also related to research question 1, these in the presence of the relationship between 'distributed leadership' and 'teacher job satisfaction'. I correlated Q39 with the two variables related to job satisfaction, and the results suggest a weak positive relationship.

- Q39 with q17 - Satisfaction with Current Work Environment
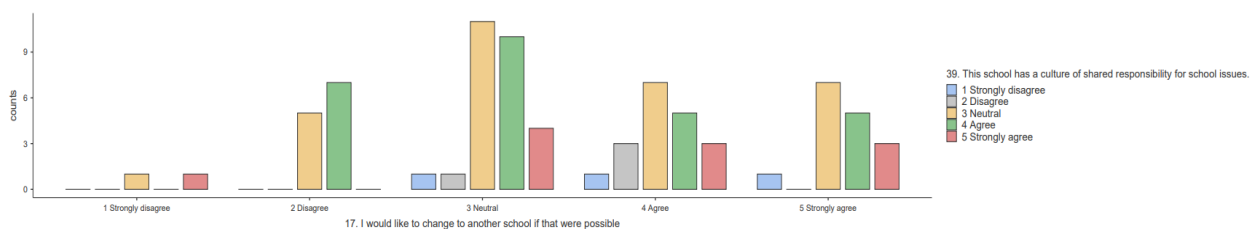
- Q39 with q20 - Satisfaction with Profession

In relation to research question 2, this chart presents the relationship between 'Distributed leadership' and 'supportive school culture" I correlated Q39 with the variable related to supportive school culture, and the results suggest there is a strong positive relationship.

- *Q39 with Q28 - mutual respect*
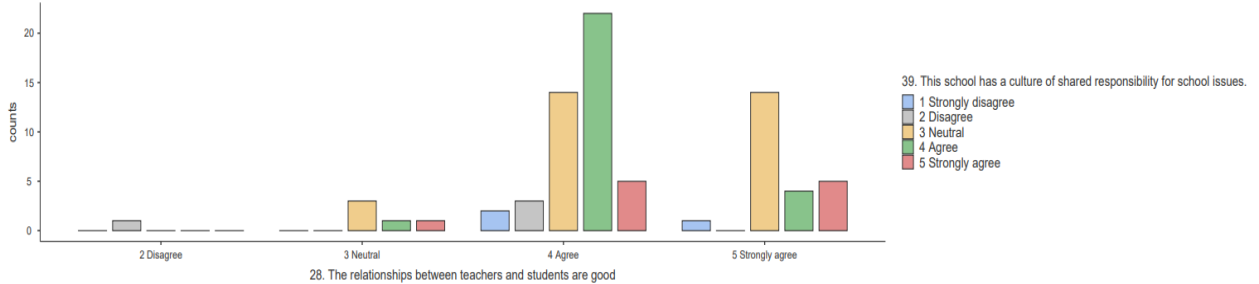
Again, related to research question 2, these in the presence of the relationship between 'distributed leadership' and 'teacher collaboration'. I correlated Q39 with the two variables related to teacher collaboration, and the results suggest there is a positive relationship.

- *Q39 with Q29 - Exchange and Coordination for Teaching*
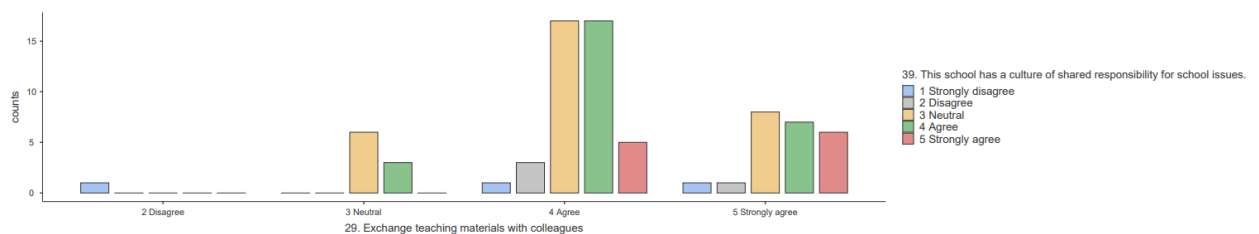
- *Q39 with Q35 - Professional collaboration*
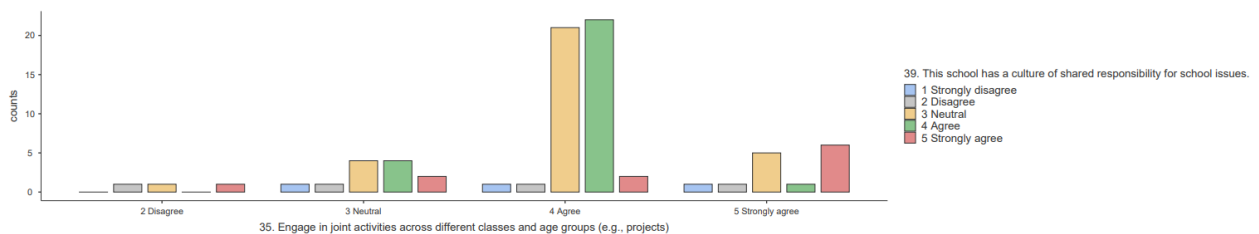
4.1.2 Principal Survey Results

As mentioned earlier I am merely presenting a sample of notable findings. First, in relation to research question 1, it is clear that principals are trying to collaborate with teachers to solve classroom problems, and this is connected to the notion that instructional leadership is related to teacher self-efficacy.

## 5. I collaborated with teachers to solve classroom discipline problems
5 responses

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
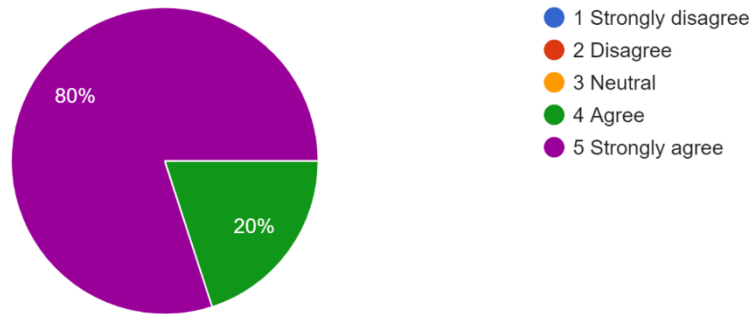
Second, principals are also resolving timetable problems for teachers, which is connected to the idea that instructional leadership is related to job satisfaction.

12. I resolved problems with the lesson timetable in this school
5 responses

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
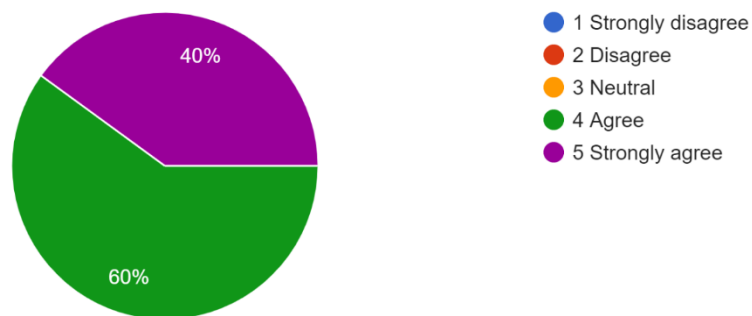
Third, related to research question 2, principals take actions to ensure teachers feel responsible for their students' learning outcomes, and this is linked with the idea that instructional leadership is connected to building a supportive school culture.

9. I took actions to ensure that teachers feel responsible for their students' learning outcomes
5 responses

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

Finally, principals evidently take measures to foster teacher collaboration.

4.2 Interview Results

The qualitative design for this study used semi-structured interviews. As part of instructional leadership, educational leaders were asked how frequently they engaged in school leadership activities. After a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts, three main themes were identified. These themes are stated below along with sample excerpts of the principals' responses.

7. I took actions to support co-operation among teachers to develop new teaching practices
5 responses

4.2.1 Encourage Teachers to Participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

As mentioned earlier, instructional leaders suggest that teachers should be guided, assisted, and developed so that student learning can be improved. Therefore, they strongly believe in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) where teachers should collaborate with each other to enhance their teaching practices and students' academic results. For instance, the vice principal stated "*I always encourage teachers to work collaboratively in planning the lesson together. Each teacher who teaches the same subject matter should meet weekly and they can share their best practices; these practices are related to different aspects: planning process, assessments, instructional methods, meeting the students' needs, differentiation...*". Educational leaders suggest that collaboration and sharing of experience among teachers can assist in identifying areas of need and developing strategies to address them, such as classroom discipline issues and instructional techniques, as stated by the principal "*I gave instructions and policies in order to raise their capacities to overcome these barriers because students came from different cultures and backgrounds. Therefore, teachers should be able to deal with these different backgrounds, mentalities, and tribes. Therefore, conducting PLC and peer observations is crucial, especially for new teachers to gain knowledge from experienced teachers to attend classes*". Another point mentioned by the assistant principal is "*we have as leaders a monitoring program where we visit some classes to track of the teachers' performance. At the end of each class, we send a report and reflect on their teaching practices to improve instructional quality*". By doing so, teachers can feel empowered to be responsible for their own professional development.

4.2.2 Promoting Teacher Autonomy in Schools

An autonomous teacher has the flexibility to choose the resources and methods used in the classroom and modify the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. Educational leaders believe that leader-centric approaches centered on the individual are no longer applicable. Due to the complexity of and rapid changes in the environment, the top-down leadership model is becoming less effective. Hence, providing a high level of autonomy is essential to accommodating such conditions, as stated by the principal "*successful teachers have always been independent in the sense that they took full responsibility for their instruction and continued to do so via constant reflection*". Teachers' initiatives on leadership tasks cultivate a power-sharing culture where teachers have the opportunity to participate and engage in democratic procedures such as sharing different perspectives, respecting others' opinions, and fostering a sense of unity and trust at work. This leads to high job satisfaction and a feeling of control over teaching practices.

4.2.3 The Role of Leadership Styles on Students' Academic Achievement

A third theme which emerged from the analysis of interview data was the relationship between leadership styles and students' academic performance. It appears that principals who adopt a distributed leadership style in their schools empower their teachers, and when teachers are empowered, they are more satisfied with their place of work; this is then reflected in the students' academic performance because teachers teach better when they are satisfied with their jobs. Ultimately, there appears to be a transitive effect from the top down - effective leadership results in effective teaching, which results in effective learning.

5. Discussion

This section presents a detailed discussion of the survey and interview results, categorised according to the research questions of this study.

5.1 RQ1 - The Relationship Between Leadership and Teachers' Self-efficacy / Job Satisfaction

My findings align with a recent analysis conducted by Liu, Bellibas, & Gu¨mu¨s (2021), which proposes that both distributed and instructional leadership are strongly and directly correlated to teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction. It has been suggested that instructional leadership is a more effective technique for raising student outcomes and teacher learning (Zheng, Yin, & Li, 2019; Hallinger, 2011). Other studies support this conclusion indicating that teachers' self-efficacy regarding their capacity to teach effectively may be influenced by the instructional leaders' conduct, whether at the institutional or individual level (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016; Zheng, Yin, & Li, 2019). Leadership practices at the school level that promote a supportive learning environment and establish guidelines and standards may increase teachers' efficacy (ibid). Leaders who set high expectations for instruction, observe teachers' instructional practices, and provide feedback enable efficacy to grow individually. Therefore, when educational leaders express their gratitude toward teachers, support their professional growth, and promote teamwork among them, it positively increases their job satisfaction (Cansoy, Parlar, & Polatcan, 2022). In addition, teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction are positively affected by distributed leadership, especially when teachers and students have greater opportunities to participate in the school decision-making process (Kılınç, et al., 2024; Liu, Bellibaş, & Gümüş, 2021). This could result in favorable connections between teachers and students.

5.2 RQ2 - The Correlation Between Leadership and Supportive School Culture / Teachers' Collaboration

This paper added supportive school culture and teacher collaboration as mediators between leadership models (instructional and distributed) and teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. It should be noted that the positive associations between leadership models and teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction are more robust through supportive school culture and teacher collaboration (Liu, Bellibaş, & Gümüş, 2021; Cansoy & Parlar, 2017). This evidence offers a more insightful approach for educational leaders to not only embrace instructional and distributed leadership but also establish a supportive school culture and teacher collaboration to enhance teacher outcomes. Hence, a supportive school culture and teacher collaboration can significantly levy teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, I assert that to increase teacher results and subsequently student learning, school leaders should concentrate on both distributed and instructional leadership. The findings affirm the findings of Liu, Bellibaş, & Gümüs (2021) that there is a strong relationship between leadership models and teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction considering the mediate effect of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration in the context of a Dubai-based school. Furthermore, this paper adds to the existing body of literature by conducting interviews with educational leaders in the UAE to provide in-depth insight into the topic. Implications of the study are that leaders should pay more attention to instructional and distributed leadership to promote teachers' self-efficacy and ensure that teachers are satisfied with the workplace so that students can have a positive learning experience. There are some limitations that should be acknowledged; one of the limitations is the lack of sample size due to the time constraints that I faced; hence, this essay may not represent the entire population. Future research should examine multiple schools in the UAE to obtain accurate findings and ensure that the results are representative of the population.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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