

Leadership Styles of School Heads and Their Impact on Teacher Performance: A Qualitative Study in Private Schools of District South Karachi

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: October 11, 2025 Revised: November 18, 2025 Accepted: December 01, 2025 Available Online: December 09, 2025		<i>This qualitative investigation examines how leadership styles used by school heads influence teacher performance in purposively selected schools situated in District South, Karachi. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with school heads and teachers, observations of leadership practices, and an assessment of official documents such as meeting minutes, performance reports, and professional development records. Using thematic analysis, the study identified four dominant leadership styles: instructional, transformational, managerial (transactional), and distributed leadership. The findings reveal that leadership styles shape teacher performance across several domains, including teachers' willingness and motivation, opportunities for professional development, sense of responsibility and systematic teamwork, teaching practices, and alignment with the school's vision. The results show that instructional and transformational leadership practices have the strongest positive influence by promoting instructional improvement, establishing clear expectations, and nurturing a supportive learning environment. Managerial/transactional leadership ensures compliance and task completion but contributes minimally to deeper instructional change. Distributed leadership—when supported through capacity building and shared decision-making structures—enhances collaboration and strengthens teachers' sense of ownership. Overall, the study recommends strengthening formal leadership preparation for school heads, expanding distributed leadership practices, and developing structured professional learning communities to support teacher growth and improve overall school performance.</i>
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Introduction

School leadership is extensively recognized as a key factor of teacher effectiveness, school development, and general academic achievement. In Pakistan, the part of the school head converts even more serious because many schools work in resource-constrained surroundings where leadership frequently alternates for mechanical support.

School leaders form the day-to-day circumstances for teaching and learning. Widespread evaluations display that leadership is second only to classroom teaching among school aspects manipulating student learning, and that effective leaders indorse teacher development, bring into line school procedures with learning goals, and create conditions that enable continued instructional improvement. Experiential syntheses report that leadership effects on learning are particularly big where pupil needs are utmost

In District South (city education region with varied school kinds), heads face multiple burdens: syllabus mandates, resource constraints, educator turnover, and community prospects. How heads lead — whether they center instruction, succeed in operations, stimulate staff, or allocate leadership — has direct effects for teachers' teaching and professional growth. This study discovers the leadership styles indorsed by heads in District South schools and how teachers perceive the impact of those styles on their performance.

Rationale of the Study

Effective school leadership is progressively documented as a main factor influencing teacher performance, instructional quality, and general school upgrading, particularly in emerging settings like Pakistan. District South Karachi includes varied school kinds where leadership differ widely, yet partial research inspects how these styles directly form teacher performance. Understanding these undercurrents is dynamic for improving teaching values, supervisory leadership training, and notifying policy improvements. This study therefore fills an important gap by exploring the specific leadership styles of school heads and their impact on teacher performance within actual school settings.

Research Objectives

1. To identify leadership styles demonstrated by school heads in District South Karachi.
2. To discover the impact of these leadership styles on teacher performance.
3. To examine challenges experienced by teachers under diverse leadership styles.

Research questions

1. What leadership styles do school heads in the designated District South schools indorse?
2. To what extend these leadership styles impact teacher performance from the teachers' perception?
3. What are the challenges experienced by teachers under different leadership styles?

Significance of the Study

This study is important as it acmes how leadership styles straight form teacher motivation, instructional practices, and school improvement. The results provide esteemed visions for policymakers, school heads, and training institutes to support leadership volumes and improve teacher performance.

Scope of the Study

The study emphasizes on schools situated in District South Karachi and inspects only the management styles of school heads and their effect on teacher performance. It does not extend student achievement or relate districts, keeping the space limited to leadership–teacher performance relationships within these designated schools.

Limitations

- The study is qualitative with purposive cases in District South and therefore not statistically generalizable.
- Teacher self-reports may have social interest bias despite triangulation with observations and forms.
- Time restraints inadequate longitudinal outlining of how leadership deviations interpret into student outcomes. Upcoming studies could use mixed methods with classroom observations over a full academic year and include student accomplishment procedures.

Literature Review

Leadership styles in institute

Educational leadership significantly shapes teacher confidence, classroom instruction, and overall school climate (Bush, 2020, p. 104). Transformational leaders stimulate teachers through a clear vision, support, and professional autonomy (Bass & Riggio, 2019). In contrast, transactional leaders rely more on monitoring, rewards, and corrective actions, which may improve compliance but not creativity (Northouse, 2021). In Pakistan, studies show that transformational leadership is associated with higher teacher commitment and reduced burnout (Shah, 2018, p. 89).

Research in Karachi's private schools also highlights that participative and distributed leadership improves teacher teamwork and job satisfaction (Farooq & Atta, 2020, p. 55). However, many public schools still depend on strict, authoritarian leadership styles, limiting teacher voice and innovation (Iqbal & Akhtar, 2021, p. 74). These contrasting findings justify further qualitative exploration in District South Karachi.

Transformational Leadership and Positive Impact

Transformational leadership is consistently emphasized in the literature as having a significant positive impact on teacher performance and professional outcomes (Nkossa & Mwanza, 2009; Rolfe, 2011). This style is characterized by leaders who serve as role models, articulate a clear and inspiring shared vision, encourage intellectual stimulation by promoting new ideas and risk-taking, and provide individualized support for teacher development (Burns, 1978; Rolfe, 2011).

Studies indicate that school heads who adopt transformational leadership enhance teacher commitment and engagement with the school's mission (Islam et al., 2021). Transformational leaders inspire staff to actively participate in school improvement and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and capacity building (Burns, 1978; Rolfe, 2011). The use of this style often results in improved instructional quality and higher levels of overall teacher effectiveness (Baluyos et al., 2019; Nkossa & Mwanza, 2009).

Transactional and Instructional Leadership

Transactional leadership focuses on exchanges between leader and follower, using rewards and consequences to regulate performance (Rolfe, 2011). Such leaders establish clear structures,

recognize task completion, and emphasize efficiency in work processes. Although less effective than transformational leadership in building deep commitment, the transactional approach supports task completion and organizational order (Rolfe, 2011). Studies suggest that school leaders may adopt transactional strategies to ensure efficient performance (Simmonds, 1994).

Instructional leadership, commonly discussed in educational settings, highlights the school head's role in supervising curriculum and instruction (Baluyos et al., 2019). Instructional leadership often involves providing direct feedback on teaching and maintaining a visible presence in classrooms. This style has been shown to positively influence teachers' instructional competencies and professional capacity (Baluyos et al., 2019). Research further indicates that instructional leadership is strongly associated with teacher job satisfaction, which in turn enhances performance.

Contingent and Detrimental Styles

The theory of situational leadership argues that no single style is universally effective; instead, leaders must adapt their approach to the context, task demands, and the capabilities of their teachers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, as cited in Imjrise, 2024). Such flexibility is considered an advantage when dealing with diverse challenges (Imjrise, 2024; Western, 2013). Democratic or participative leadership, which values shared input and collaborative decision-making, is also associated with greater autonomy, trust, and improved teacher performance (Mgbodile, 2012; Imhangbe et al., 2020).

Conversely, autocratic leadership (which restricts teacher participation) and laissez-faire leadership (characterized by minimal direction) are often found to negatively affect teacher performance (Mgbodile, 2012; Rolfe, 2011). Autocratic leadership, in particular, reduces teacher motivation and may lead to resistance or withdrawal of effort (Rolfe, 2011).

Transactional/managerial leadership. Transactional or managerial leadership focuses on procedures, clarifying expectations, monitoring compliance, and using rewards or sanctions to regulate performance (Rolfe, 2011; Northouse, 2021). This style is useful for maintaining order, structure, and clarity in school operations (Simmonds, 1994). Research shows that while transactional leadership ensures basic compliance and task completion, it contributes minimally to deeper instructional improvement unless paired with developmental supports (Bush, 2020; Baluyos et al., 2019). Reviews further indicate that transactional approaches produce safe and predictable work environments but have smaller effects on teachers' instructional growth compared to transformational or instructional leadership models (Rolfe, 2011; Simmonds, 1994).

Dispersed leadership. Distributed leadership emphasizes that leadership is shared across individuals, roles, and tools within a school, rather than residing solely in the principal (Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). This perspective highlights the contribution of teacher leaders, coordinators, department heads, and informal leaders to school improvement. When school heads intentionally distribute responsibilities and build staff capacity, the collective influence on teacher practice becomes significant (Harris, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2007). Research suggests that distributed leadership strengthens collaboration, enhances teacher ownership, and improves organizational functioning when supported by clear structures and shared decision-making processes (Harris, 2004; Farooq & Atta, 2020).

How leadership impacts teacher performance

Comprehensive reviews show leaders influence student learning indirectly by shaping teacher conditions through setting direction, developing people, and making the organization function. Specifically, leadership affects teacher learning groups, the availability of instructional resources and feedback, teachers' professional identity, and the organization of time and schedules for

professional learning. These mechanisms are the channels through which leadership converts vision into practice.

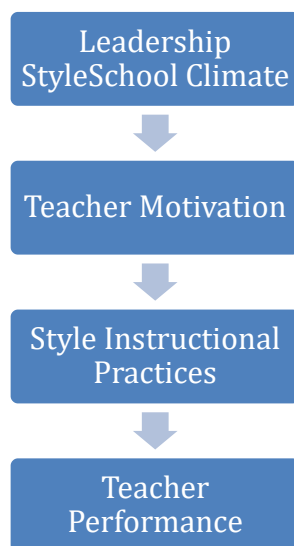
Indication from Pakistan

Studies in Pakistan suggest that head teachers who endorse instructional leadership practices (resource provision, visible presence, classroom observation, feedback) correlate with more positive school climate and teacher insights; instructional leadership foretold substantial alteration in school climate metrics in a Punjab study. This indicates the local salience of instructional leadership behaviours in shaping teacher experience.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework exemplifies how leadership style affects teacher presentation through school environment, inspiration, statement, and professional sustenance.

Flowchart:



Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative multiple-case study design was implemented to allow an in-depth exploration of leadership practices across five private schools located in District South, Karachi. Each school was treated as a distinct case, while cross-case comparisons enabled the identification of common patterns and contextual differences. This design strengthened analytical depth, enhanced trustworthiness, and preserved the rich contextual detail needed to understand leadership–teacher performance dynamics.

Sample of the study

A total of five private schools were purposively selected to represent diversity within District South (varying fee structures, gender compositions, and organizational cultures). From each school, one school head was selected as a key informant, along with two classroom teachers representing different subjects and grade levels. This sampling strategy ensured maximum variation and captured multiple perspectives on leadership practices and their effects on teacher performance.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three balancing methods:

- **Semi-structured interviews:** Interviews were conducted with five school heads and ten teachers, focusing on leadership behaviours, communication patterns, professional development opportunities, and perceived effects on teacher performance. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed verbatim.
- **Non-participant observations:** The researcher observed staff meetings, classroom walkthroughs carried out by school heads, and professional development sessions. Observation notes documented leadership–teacher interactions, feedback practices, decision-making processes, and the overall instructional climate.
- **Document review** of school improvement plans, meeting minutes, teacher assessment records, and specialized development certification to verify and triangulate meeting data.

All members provided well-versed accord, and interviews were transcribed verbatim. Ethical approval and institutional consents were obtained before data gathering.

Ethical Consideration

Earlier to leading the study, authorization was found from the school principal to guarantee that the research is approved and supported by the institution (Etikan et al., 2016). Participants' privileges will be appreciated, and they will be well-versed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their aptitude to extract at any time without any negative consequences. Secrecy and obscurity will be continued by assigning codes to participants instead of using real names, and all collected data will be firmly stored.

Data Analysis

Data analysis shadowed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis outline, which involved acquaintance with the data, open coding, theme development, theme modification, naming of melodies, and mixture into the final report. Records, observation notes, and documents were coded physically. Reliability was supported through **method triangulation**, likening interview data with observations and documents. **Peer checking** was also led by sharing brief abstracts with members to confirm correctness, enhancing conformability and honesty.

Findings

The examination of interviews, observations, and papers produced **five major themes** describing the leadership styles skillful across the five schools and the mechanisms through which these styles inclined teacher presentation.

Theme 1: Leading Leadership Styles Detected

Sub theme (a): Instructional Leadership (three schools)

In three of the schools, school head established strong instructional leadership. These leaders frequently led classroom observations, relieved professional development workshops, and shared model lesson plans with educators. They used student work examples, valuation data, and curriculum appraisals to set theoretical imports for their staff. Teachers supposed these heads as "hands-on," sociable, and "instructionally knowledgeable," observing that their leadership contributed directly to recover lesson planning and classroom processes. Observation records also showed common educational discussions during staff meetings and follow-up classroom visits.

Sub theme (b): Transformational Leadership (two schools)

Two schools showed clear features of transformational leadership. The school heads in these schools connected a persuasive vision for school improvement, fortified innovation, and highlighted professional development. They available adapted mentoring and expressive support to teachers and refined an environment where research with student-centered teaching methods was encouraged. Teachers reported feeling more interested, authorized, and valued, which augmented their readiness to adopt new instructional approaches.

Sub theme (c): Transactional / Decision-making Leadership (present in all schools)

Crossways all schools, rudiments of transactional or managerial management were current, though the degree varied. Heads usually focused on safeguarding compliance with rules, schedules, attendance, certification, and administrative events. While teachers recognized that these practices helped uphold discipline and structural stability, they also highlighted that executive controls alone did not translate into improved teaching quality. Compliance-driven omission caused in surface-level changes such as completing registers and maintaining files, rather than deeper development in education.

Sub theme (d): Distributed Leadership (developing in two schools)

Circulated leadership practices were emergent in two of the schools, where heads assigned leadership responsibilities to senior teachers, section coordinators, or grade front-runners. These errands comprised curriculum planning, leading peer lesson observations, and subsidiary fresh teachers. Educators in these schools stated a stronger sense of common ownership and cooperative upgrading culture. Combined preparation sessions, peer mentoring, and shared decision-making procedures improved teamwork and wired professional collections.

Theme 2: Paths from Leadership to Instructor Performance

Thematic study exposed **five key pathways** through which management styles shaped teacher presentation crossways the selected schools.

Sub theme (a): Expert Learning and Volume Building

Instructional leaders frolicked a vital role in ornamental teacher capacity by establishing beset professional development sessions, modelling lessons, and offering individualized feedback. Educators who contributed in organized training doings and response cycles reported real improvements in lesson design, questioning techniques, and assessment practices. Document analysis long-established that such developmental ropes formed a steady and methodical part of instructional leadership in the individual schools.

Sub theme (b): Classroom Practice and Instructional Techniques

Leadership styles that comprised classroom observations and formative response directly prejudiced teachers' instructional practices. Educators labelled receiving immoral suggestions such as refining learning objectives, regulating pacing, using higher-order enquiries, or mixing formative assessment tools. Observation notes also showed instances where school heads established instructional plans during walkthroughs, encouragement instant changes in teacher practice.

Sub theme (c): Teacher Motivation and Confidence

Transformational leadership had a robust influence on teacher confidence. Teachers described emotion valued when principals recognized their energies, renowned small attainments, or

delivered personalized encouragement. This emotional provision augmented their inherent motivation, job gratification, and readiness to adopt new teaching strategies. Numerous teachers renowned that they put in “extra effort” since the school head credit made them texture appreciated and trusted.

Sub theme (d): Responsibility and Criteria

Transactional leadership practices aided solemnize expectations concerning planning, assessment, presence, and classroom management. Though these responsibility events ensured constancy and obedience, they were less real in driving deep instructional developments unless paired with developmental ropes. Teachers reported that in schools where responsibility was weighty but developmental support was incomplete, changes remained shallow (e.g., updated registers rather than better classroom engagement).

Theme 4: Supportive Culture through Dispersed Leadership

Distributed leadership cultivated solid teamwork and peer-based knowledge. When school heads displaced leadership shares and encouraged team-based preparation, teachers specified bigger opportunities to learn from one another. Peer observations, shared lesson planning sessions, and cooperative discussions helped refine instructional practices. Educators in these schools labelled a sense of shared accountability for student learning, causative to a more maintainable development culture.

Theme 5: Contextual Mediators

Crossways the five schools, numerous contextual issues prejudiced the extent to which leadership practices could enhance teacher performance. Partial teaching materials, high student–teacher ratios, insufficient classroom space, and external accountability burdens sometimes limited the skill of leaders to device instructional improvements. In under-resourced schools, even sturdy instructional leadership had incomplete influence without complementary material and universal support. Moreover, teacher workload and managerial loads weakened how efficiently educators could respond to leadership creativities.

Discussion

Instructional and transformational leadership crop balancing improvements

Reliable with international mixtures, schools where heads joint instructional emphasis (classroom attendance, response, PD) with transformational behaviour (vision, modified support) presented stronger teacher learning and better classroom practices. The Wallace Foundation review argues that leaders indorse knowledge by site instructions, developing people, and formation the group function; this study’s findings cut-glass those three tracks.

Transactional leadership: essential but inadequate

Administrative clearness and procedures are necessary to maintain order but insufficient alone to change teaching practice. Teachers in schools dominated by transactional modes complied with paperwork and attendance expectations but reported limited improvement in pedagogical competence — echoing broader evidence that transactional behaviours yield smaller instructional gains without developmental complements.

Distributed leadership increases scale and sustainability

When heads dispersed leadership parts (prospectus leads, peer coaches), educator performance welfares scaled outside what a single head could attain. This bring into line with Spillane’s

proposition that management practices passed across people and errands are strong pedals for school improvement.

Local suggestions: Pakistan setting

Results copy Pakistani sign representative instructional leadership tells with hopeful school setting and teacher visions (Akram et al., 2018). In District South, national prospects, central inspection procedures, and reserve restraints shape what heads can do; yet many school heads who deliberately ordered education originate ways to provision teacher learning within those restraints

Practical implications and recommendations

For policy creators, school organizations, and heads:

- **Leadership growth prioritizing instructional exercise.** Pre- and in-service training should highlight classroom observation, evidence-based response, and enabling teacher learning groups. (Leaders must be prepared to “grow people” as a clear role.)
- **Combine answerability with development.** Presentation appraisal systems should link observations to organized follow-up ropes (training, modeling)
- **Promote circulated leadership.** Inspire heads to classify and grow teacher leaders; create official roles (curriculum lead, PD coordinator) with time distributions so peer support is maintainable.
- **Contextual reserve sustenance.** Deliver negligible instructional capitals and time payments for in-school PD; without these, leadership labors have incomplete effect.
- **Local coaching networks.** Region offices can shape clusters of schools for joint PD and peer connections to spread effective leadership practices.

Conclusion

This study confirms that school heads’ management styles evocatively form teacher performance. Instructional management and transformational behaviours most straight support teacher learning and better classroom practice, while dispersed leadership increases and withstands improvements. Transactional practices are essential for order but necessitate balancing developmental action to translate into instructional gains. For District South (and similar contexts), capitalizing in leaders’ instructional and disseminated dimensions, coupled with capitals and systemic supports, offers a practical route to consolidation teacher performance and, eventually, student learning.

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