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### Impact of School Leadership Style on the performance of Teachers: Public Secondary Schools Evidence from Baluchistan

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#### Article Information

#### ABSTRACT

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##### Keywords

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Schools; Balochistan;  
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The research is an investigation of the impact of administrative approaches by principals in the performance of teachers in Balochistan, Pakistan, in the public secondary schools, with particular emphasis on three of the classical leadership behaviors described by Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939): democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership. With the help of a quantitative, positivism research design, 528 teachers and 86 principals in six Naserabad Division districts were surveyed using two Likert-scaled, structured questionnaires. The relationships among each leadership style and various dimensions of teacher performance such as professional competence, motivation and job satisfaction, collaboration and teamwork, innovation and creativity, and professional development were tested using descriptive, correlational and regression analyses. Results indicate that democratic leadership was the most commonly perceived ( $M = 3.94$ ) and strongest positive predictor of teacher performance ( $586, p = .001$ ) followed by laissez-faire leadership, which also had a less significant yet statistically significant positive effect ( $= .490, p = .001$ ) when teacher autonomy was combined with professional competence. On the other hand, teacher performance was negatively correlated with autocratic leadership ( $= -.258, p = .002$ ). The three styles accounted for 56.1 percent on teacher performance. This paper concludes that the most effective lever that principals can use in resource-starved state schools is participatory, teacher-inclusive leadership practices, and it provides practical suggestions on how principals should be trained and educated in Balochistan.



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Leadership has been known to be one of the most decisive factors that determine the success of any institution and schools are not an exception. Much management and organizational research has always found the leadership style of the head of an institution to be a major factor of the working conditions, morale and productivity of the employees (Shum & Cheng, 1997; Likert, 1967). The principal is in a special place in education, in particular: he or she is the person who must implement policy in everyday classroom life, the day-to-day administrative actions of the principal will influence the way teachers plan their lessons, the way they manage the classroom, and the way they approach their profession (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hallinger, 2011).

The classical typology of leadership, which has been created by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), is one of the most persistent and popular typologies proposed by leadership scholars. It identifies three general administrative behaviors: democratic leadership, which is based on participation, shared decision-making, and open communication; autocratic leadership, which is based on centralized power, strict adherence to rules, and limited teacher involvement; and laissez-faire leadership, which is based on minimal supervision, high delegation, and wide teacher autonomy. Although this typology has been used in an organizational and educational context in research over the past decades, there is very little empirical research that has tested the typology in Pakistan, and hardly any in Balochistan, which is the largest but least-resourced province in the country.

Secondary education in Balochistan is provided in markedly different conditions than in Punjab or Sindh: there is insufficient funding, there are shortages of teachers, the populations are often scattered in the rural areas, and the principals are often promoted to the leadership positions without receiving any administrative training. These restrictions are particularly acute within Naserabad Division in particular, i.e. the districts of Naserabad, Jafferabad, Sohbat Pur, Usta Muhammad, Jhal Magsi, and Bolan/Kachi. Knowledge of what administrative style principals in this context are actually practicing, and what

style most likely enhances teacher effectiveness, therefore has immediate practical implications to provincial education policy.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Although the connection between school leadership and teacher performance has been well established internationally, in Balochistan, many of the state secondary schools report low teacher morale, variable quality of instruction, and low levels of professional involvement. Previous Pakistani studies of this relationship have focused more on Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and have scarcely experimented with the classical democratic-autocratic-laissez-faire typology as a single analytical framework. Consequently, today the principals and policymakers in Balochistan do not have context-specific, instrument-based evidence of the administrative behaviors that can best contribute to teacher performance. This paper is a fill to that gap, as it empirically investigates the impact of all three leadership styles together between principals and teachers in the Naserabad Division of the public secondary schools.

### The objectives of the study are

The following objectives were used to guide the study:

- 1) the study aimed at determining the administrative styles that are most commonly practiced by principals in the Naserabad Division schools;
- 2) the study aimed at evaluating the impact of the leadership styles: democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire on teacher performance;
- 3) the study aimed at evaluating variation in teacher performance based on demographic variables that include gender, age, and experience; and
- 4) the study aimed at comparing the impact of the principal style of leadership on teacher performance in boy's schools and girl's schools.

### 1.4 Importance of the Research

It is hoped that the results of this study will help district and provincial education authorities to plan evidence-based principal training and professional development programs. The study can provide practical advice in leadership appointments, designing in-service training, and

school supervision policy, as well as provide province-specific empirical results to an otherwise South Asian literature that has given little attention to Balochistan.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptualizing Leadership Style

Leadership style is a fairly predictable pattern of behavior that a leader exhibits when leading, motivating, and relating to followers (Northouse, 2021). This trend is manifested in education by the way a principal shares expectation, authority, oversees instruction and addresses the professional needs of teachers. The classical typology of the work of Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) and subsequently developed by Likert (1967) is still central to this literature, in that it describes three behaviorally distinct, and in practice often comorbid, administrative orientations: democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire.

### 2.2 Democratic Leadership

Democratic or participative leadership is characterized by the joint decision-making process, the open dialogue, and the mutual responsibility of the principal and teaching staff (Likert, 1967; Northouse, 2021). Principals who use this style usually engage teachers in decision-making processes, assign significant responsibility, give frequent positive feedbacks, and foster a collaborative school environment. Empirical studies in various settings have associated democratic leadership with increased teacher morale, enhanced professional commitment, and better quality of instruction, which is in large part due to the fact that democratic leaders meet the intrinsic needs of teachers to autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Khasawneh et al., 2021; Ali & Hassan, 2022). Participative principals in the context of South Asian school systems in particular have been found to establish the trust and professional cohesion to yield the high teacher satisfaction (Rahman & Akter, 2021).

### 2.3 Autocratic Leadership

In autocratic leadership, the main person does all decision-making, and the consultations are minimal and the rules and procedures are strictly adhered to (Rahim, 2016). Short term discipline,

punctuality and compliance can be encouraged by this style especially within bureaucratic systems or those that are resource-strapped where there is administrative convenience in giving clear direction down (Goleman, 2000; Lunenburg, 2010). Nevertheless, excessive centralization of control has been proven multiple times to stifle teacher innovation, decrease intrinsic motivation, and elevate professional stress (Adeyemi, 2010; Khattak & Rehman, 2021). Since the historical culture of the public education system in Pakistan has been characterized by a hierarchical and centralized administration, autocratic behavior is still relatively widespread among school principals where it is not necessarily the best way of achieving better teacher performance.

### 2.4 Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is described by the lack of principal involvement, high levels of delegation, and high levels of teacher autonomy in teaching and administrative choices (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2021). The style may foster innovation and self-directed professionalism among more experienced, intrinsically motivated teachers, but is also linked to inconsistency and a lack of accountability where guidance or feedback frameworks are poor (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015). The empirical findings on laissez-faire leadership are thus more inconsistent than those on the other two styles: some studies have found that laissez-faire may have negative relationships with performance (Skogstad et al., 2007), whereas others have reported that moderate non-interference when experienced as a demonstration of professional trust and not administrative neglect may be linked to positive outcomes (Kumar & Sinha, 2019).

### 2.5 Leadership and Teacher Performance: Regional Evidence

In Pakistan, studies on the leadership performance relationship have largely focused on Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Research in these provinces generally demonstrates that participative and supportive leadership behaviors are predictive of greater job satisfaction and classroom performance among teachers, whereas directive or centralized control yield smaller and less significant benefits (Iqbal & Shah, 2019; Khan & Zia, 2020). There is limited evidence unique to Balochistan. In a study of Quetta and Zhob districts in the University of Balochistan,

supportive, instructionally engaged leadership was moderately positively correlated with teacher job performance, and a study in Ziarat reported a positive, moderate correlation between democratic and delegating leadership behaviors and stronger teacher organizational commitment (Qureshi & Magsi, 2022). These results, albeit on a relatively small scale, are generally in line with the global trend: participative leadership approaches are expected to be more effective than centralized control in enhancing teacher performance, but the processes and the magnitudes of the effects depend on the context.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

This report makes the administrative style of principals, as operationalized as democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership behavior, the independent variable, and teacher performance as the dependent variable, evaluated on five dimensions: professional competence, motivation and job satisfaction, collaboration and teamwork, innovation and creativity, and professional development. In line with previous literature, the hypotheses of the framework are that democratic leadership will demonstrate the most robust positive relationship with teacher performance through enhancing intrinsic motivation and professional trust; autocratic leadership will demonstrate a negative or neutral relationship; and laissez-faire leadership will demonstrate smaller and more dispersed positive relationships, depending on inherent competence and self-direction of teachers.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The research was quantitative and descriptive-correlational based on the positivist research paradigm, where the administrative style and teacher performance relationship is an objective and measurable phenomenon that can be statistically analyzed (Creswell, 2014). Pre-specified hypotheses based on the leadership literature were tested in a deductive approach.

### 3.2 Population and Sampling

The sample population was all principals and teachers in the six districts in Naserabad Division; Naserabad, Jafferabad, Sohbat Pur, Usta Muhammad, Jhal Magsi, and Bolan/Kachi. The

records of Education Management Information System (EMIS) show that the division has 182 public secondary schools and 3,472 teachers (2,038 males; 1,434 female). A proportionally stratified random sample of 346 teachers and 64 principals was aimed at using the sample-size table created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) according to the sample-size parameters: sample level (higher secondary/secondary), gender and district. The final results of data collection provided 528 valid teacher questionnaires and 86 valid principal questionnaires, which is more than the required minimum sample and enhances the statistical power of analysis.

### 3.3 Research Instruments

The researcher constructed two self-administered questionnaires that were structured into two parts, including a questionnaire of principals and a questionnaire of teachers, with a five-point Likert scale (from 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree). All instruments started with a demographic section (gender, age, qualification, school location, and experience) and scale items of the three leadership styles - Democratic, Autocratic, and Laissez-Faire - and in the case of the teacher questionnaire, five dimensions of teacher performance. In the process of full deployment, both instruments were peer-reviewed on content-validity by experts and tested on 20-30 principals and 15-20 teachers. There were excellent reliabilities among all major scales: Cronbachs alpha of the teacher questionnaire with the Democratic (.936), Autocratic (.917), and Laissez-Faire (.849) subscales, and with the principal questionnaire of Democratic (.872), Autocratic (.784), and Laissez-Faire (.659) subscales, all of which are well above or close to conventional thresholds of internal consistency.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of data was conducted with the help of SPSS (Version 22) and SmartPLS (Version 4). The demographic profile and the prevalence of each leadership style was characterized by descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and frequency distributions). The strength and direction of the relationship between each style of leadership and the performance of teachers was tested using Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way and two-way ANOVA were used to

compare the teacher performance in terms of gender, school type and other demographic factors. The p-value of  $p < .05$  was used as a significance level.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

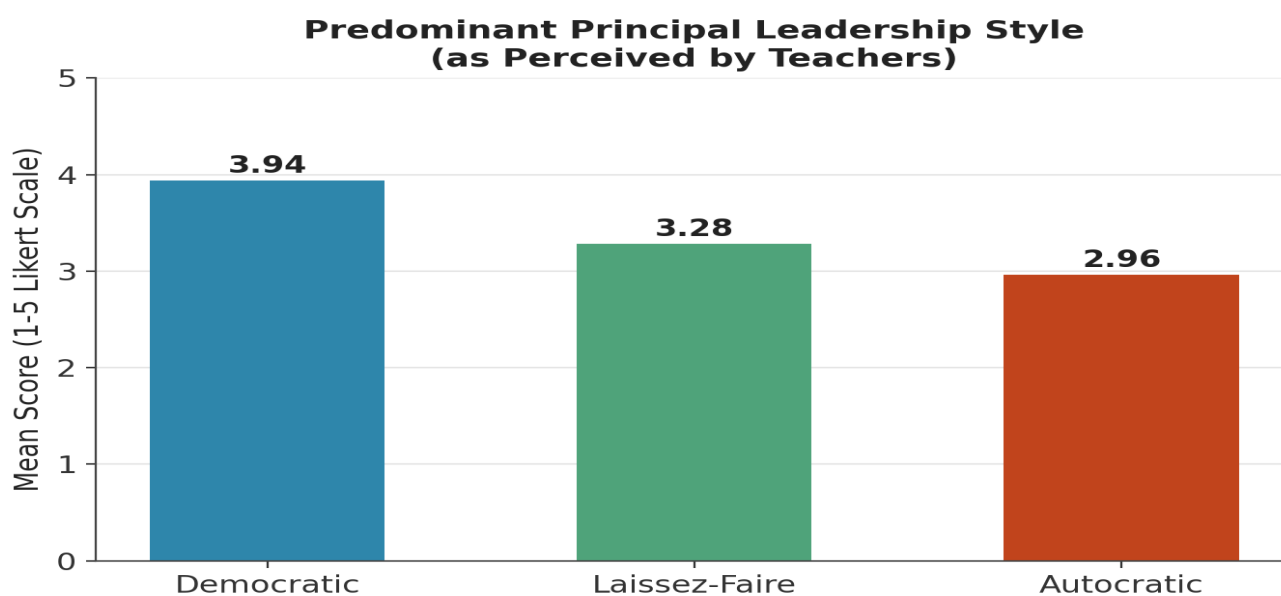
Of the 528 teachers who responded, 71.6% were male and 28.4% were female, which is indicative of the concentration of boys schools in the sampled districts. The most common age range was 26-35 years and slightly more than half of the teachers indicated five years or less of teaching experience, which suggests a fairly junior teaching workforce. Of the 86 major respondents, males also outnumbered females and majority of

the principals had bachelor's degree and professional B.Ed or M.Ed Qualification; most (70) had completed at least some management or leadership training program, with most having 0-2 years of experience in a headship position.

### 4.2 Predominant Leadership Style

The highest rating of teachers on the Democratic leadership subscale ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ) was followed by Laissez-Faire ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) and Autocratic leadership ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). A single-sample ANOVA established that such differences were statistically significant,  $F(2, 137) = 246.22$ ,  $p < .001$ , which revealed that democratic behavior was obviously the most dominant and the most positively rated administrative style in the sampled schools.

**Figure 1:** Mean teacher-rated scores for each principal leadership style (5-point scale)



**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics for principal leadership styles (teacher-reported,  $N = 528$ )

| Leadership Style | Mean (M) | SD   | Rank |
|------------------|----------|------|------|
| Democratic       | 3.94     | 0.41 | 1st  |
| Laissez-Faire    | 3.28     | 0.52 | 2nd  |
| Autocratic       | 2.96     | 0.69 | 3rd  |

### 4.3 Teacher Performance by Dimension

Teachers indicated that their self-assessed performance levels were always high in all five dimensions which were measured. Agreement

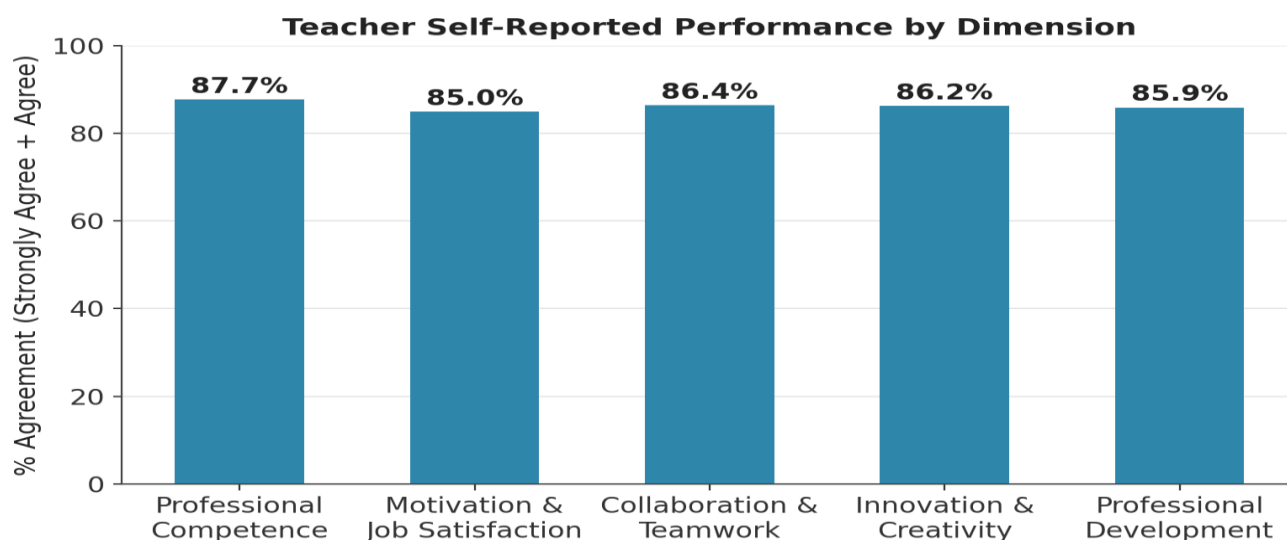
(Strongly Agree + Agree) was over 84% on each dimension: Professional Competence (87.7%), Collaboration and Teamwork (86.4%), Innovation and Creativity (86.3%), Professional Development (85.9%), and Motivation and Job



Satisfaction (85.0%). These findings indicate that, overall, educators in the sampled schools feel that they are capable, interested professionals - a point

of reference that the difference in the influence of the leadership style becomes particularly informative.

**Figure 2:** *Percentage of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing with positive self-ratings, by performance dimension.*

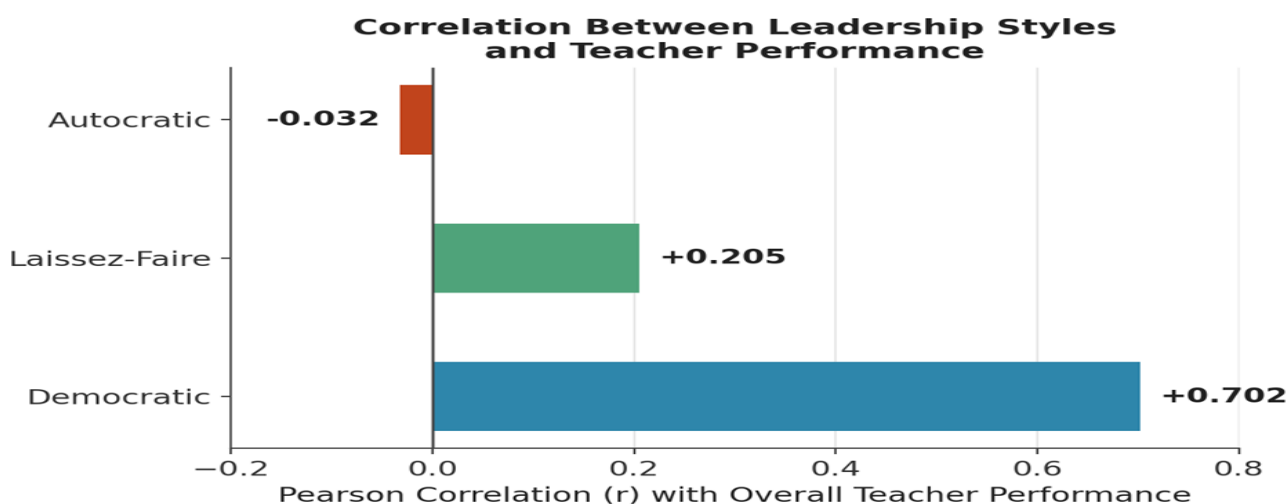


#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that there was a positive, statistically significant, strong relationship between Democratic leadership and overall teacher performance ( $r = .702$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and this trend was replicated in all the performance sub-dimensions, including professional competence ( $r = .582$ ), motivation and job satisfaction ( $r = .628$ ), collaboration and teamwork ( $r = .624$ ), innovation and creativity ( $r = .560$ ), and professional development ( $r = .527$ ). The positive

relationship between Laissez-Faire leadership and overall teacher performance was less but significant ( $r = .205$ ,  $p < .01$ ). There was a statistically non-significant, and insignificantly negative correlation between autocratic leadership and overall teacher performance ( $r = -.032$ ,  $p > .05$ ), but a somewhat stronger negative association was observed in the parallel model using principal-reported data (based on self-assessment of their own style and their perception of staff performance).

**Figure 3:** *Correlation of each leadership style with overall teacher performance (teacher-reported data,  $N = 528$ )*



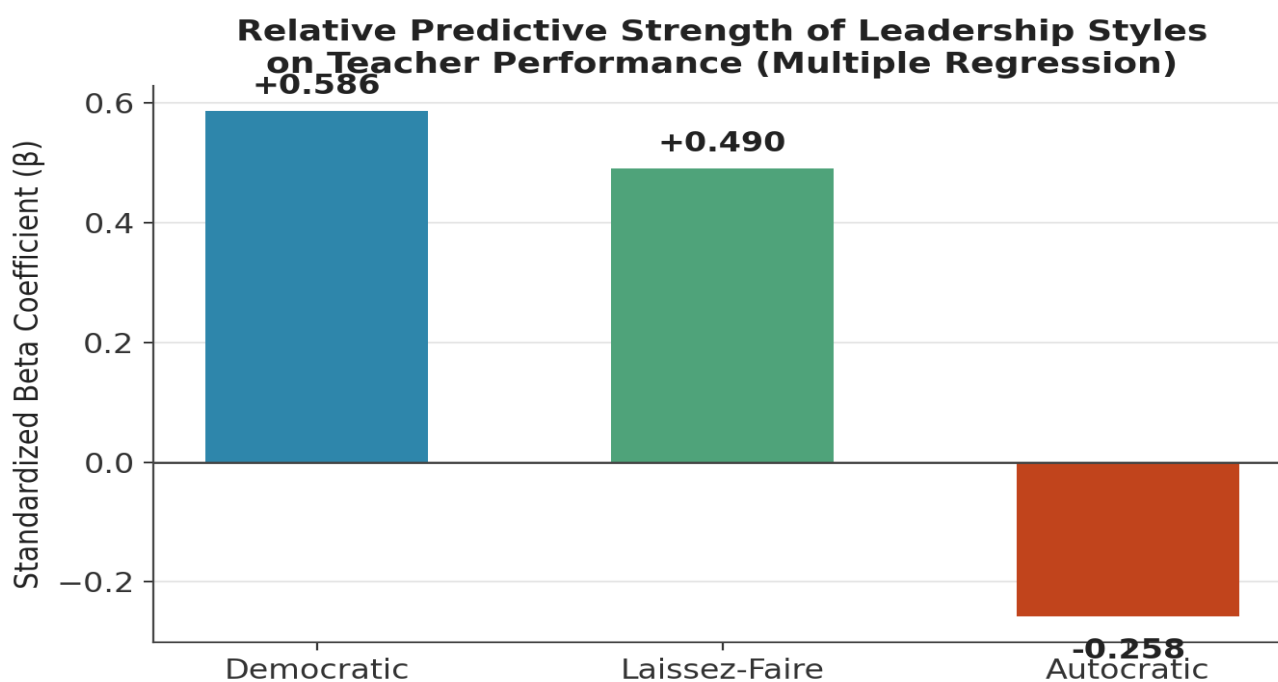
**Table 2:** Correlation matrix of leadership styles and overall teacher performance. \*\*\* $p < .01$ 

|               | Democratic | Autocratic | Laissez-Faire | Teacher Performance |
|---------------|------------|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Democratic    | 1.000      | 0.075      | 0.271         | 0.702**             |
| Autocratic    | —          | 1.000      | 0.520         | -0.032              |
| Laissez-Faire | —          | —          | 1.000         | 0.205**             |

#### 4.5 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

A multiple linear regression of Democratic, Autocratic and Laissez-Faire leadership as predictors of overall teacher performance yielded a statistically significant model,  $R = .749$ ,  $R^2 = .561$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .545$ , which showed that the three leadership styles jointly accounted for 56.1% of the teacher performance variance. The

strongest positive predictor ( $= .586$ ,  $t = 7.871$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was the Democratic leadership which is followed by Laissez-Faire leadership which also had a significant positive effect ( $= .490$ ,  $t = 6.052$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The negative predictor of significance ( $= -.258$ ,  $t = -3.140$ ,  $p = .002$ ) was autocratic leadership, which indicated that the greater the centralization and control-based administration, the lower the teacher performance was under the other two styles.

**Figure 4:** Standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) for each leadership style predicting overall teacher performance.**Table 3:** Multiple regression results predicting overall teacher performance from principal leadership style.

| Predictor           | B     | SE   | $\beta$ | t      | p      |
|---------------------|-------|------|---------|--------|--------|
| (Constant)          | .476  | .472 | —       | 1.007  | .317   |
| Democratic Style    | .565  | .072 | .586    | 7.871  | < .001 |
| Laissez-Faire Style | .622  | .103 | .490    | 6.052  | < .001 |
| Autocratic Style    | -.249 | .079 | -.258   | -3.140 | .002   |

The results of individual structural-model tests supported the regression results: Democratic leadership exhibited a strong significant positive path to teacher performance ( $t = 9.187$ ,  $p = .001$ ); Laissez-Faire leadership exhibited a smaller but still significant positive path to teacher performance ( $t = 12.609$ ,  $p = .001$ ) when mediated by teacher motivation; and the negative path of Autocratic leadership to teacher performance was not statistically significant in the structural model ( $t = 1.662$ ,  $p = .097$ ), although the direction was consistently negative in all analyses. The mediation analysis also revealed that teacher motivation and job satisfaction moderately mediated the impact of Democratic and Laissez-Faire leadership on teacher performance however not significantly mediated the (already weak) impact of Autocratic leadership, indicating that the participative and autonomy-supportive leadership styles acted significantly via their influence on the intrinsic motivation of the

**Table 4:** Summary of hypothesis-testing outcomes.

| Hypothesis                                                                        | Decision            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| H1: Male and female principals differ in administrative style.                    | Partially supported |
| H2: Administrative styles significantly affect teacher performance.               | Supported           |
| H3: Democratic style significantly affects teacher performance.                   | Supported           |
| H4: Autocratic style significantly affects teacher performance.                   | Not supported       |
| H5: Laissez-faire style significantly affects teacher performance.                | Supported           |
| H6: Teacher performance differs by principal gender $\times$ style.               | Not supported       |
| H7: Teacher-performance perspective varies significantly across the three styles. | Supported           |
| H8: Administrative style effects differ between boys' and girls' schools.         | Not supported       |

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this research give convergent evidence that the most closely linked administrative style with high teacher performance in the Balochistan governmental secondary schools is democratic leadership. This observation is reminiscent of the original assertions of Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) as well as subsequent discussions of Likert (1967) and Northouse (2021), who all maintain that participative leadership enhances the performance of a group through greater satisfaction, cooperation, and ownership of the followers. It also aligns with South Asian evidence that

teachers.

Demographic comparisons were not statistically significant in terms of overall teacher performance based on age, years of service, or the location of school (urban vs. rural) and there was no statistically significant interaction between principal gender and leadership style. A small yet statistically significant gender difference was in favor of male teachers on professional competence, innovation and creativity, as well as professional development, but not on motivation or collaboration. Comparisons of boys and girl's schools did not establish any significant difference between the overall teacher performance between the two groups, but the positive relationship between the Democratic and Laissez-Faire leadership was significantly stronger in boy's schools than in girls' schools - which could be due to differences in sample sizes between the two types of schools, or a real effect of context.

demonstrates that principals involving teachers in the decision-making process and ensuring open communication can promote higher levels of professional commitment (Rahman & Akter, 2021; Khan & Zia, 2020).

The antagonistic relationship between autocratic leadership and teacher performance also fits a long history of organizational research, starting with Likert (1967) and McGregor (1960) to more recent Pakistani research, which has indicated that high centralization and strict adherence to rules are likely to stifle creativity, make work more stressful, and decrease teacher involvement (Adeyemi, 2010; Khattak & Rehman, 2021). Though this negative effect was statistically



significant in the regression model, the weaker structural-model result is that the harm autocratic behavior has on performance could be more due to its ability to undermine motivation rather than any administrative mechanism, which is also supported by the mediation analysis as autocratic leadership demonstrated no statistically significant relationship with teacher motivation whatsoever.

The beneficial, but less significant, impact of laissez-faire leadership is a more unique discovery, as a greater part of the global literature considers non-interference as a neutral or slightly negative impact on performance (Skogstad et al., 2007). A possible reason, in line with the self-determination theory, is that even in the relatively long-served teaching staff in Balochistan, the principal non-interference can sometimes be construed as an expression of professional trust, as opposed to administrative negligence - especially among those teachers who already enjoy high intrinsic motivation and classroom effectiveness. The observation that the influence of laissez-faire leadership on performance was mostly mediated through teacher motivation supports this view, suggesting that autonomy can be converted into improved performance but not in the absence of an engaged teaching force, which is highly motivated.

When combined, these results support the idea that the best principals in this regard will hardly be able to stick to one style in its purest form. Instead, there is some evidence of a participative core - democratic involvement, open communication, and shared decision-making - with some selective delegated autonomy to experienced, competent teachers, and centralized, autocratic control, but only where it is truly needed and not used as an administrative default stance.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research aimed to investigate the influence of

the administrative style of principals; democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire, on the teacher performance of the public secondary schools in Naserabad Division, Balochistan. The data is clear in a single point: democratic leadership is perceived as the most common and is the most effective administrative leadership style that principals can have in this context, with a less significant but still significant positive role being played by laissez-faire leadership in combination with teacher competence and motivation. Autocratic leadership, in its turn, does not provide any benefit in terms of performance, and has a quantifiable cost, the loss of teacher motivation. The three styles combined explain more than 50 percent of the variance in teacher performance, highlighting the importance of central administrative behavior to teacher performance in a resource-constrained system.

It is suggested, based on these findings, that:

- 1) provincial and district education authorities should place greater emphasis in the leadership-training programs on democratic, participatory administrative skills (shared decision-making, open communication, delegation, and recognition) in the recruitment and induction of principals, as well as in continuing professional development;
- 2) the risk of centralized, autocratic administration should be more explicitly covered in the leadership-training programs, especially its impact on teacher motivation;
- 3) the future research should be conducted in terms of longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and
- 4) the apparent difference in the leadership effects between boys and girl's schools should be further investigated. Such areas would enhance the theoretical and policy-relevant aspects of the research on school leadership in one of the least studied educational settings in Pakistan.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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