



How Do Principals' Leadership Styles Affect Teachers' Professional Well-being?

Xiang Yuanyuan^{*}, Bity Salwana Alias²

¹Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

²Research Centre of Education Leadership and Policy, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: Email: bity@ukm.edu.my; yasmine1987@163.com

Citation: Xiang Yuanyuan, Bity Salwana Alias, (2024), How Do Principals' Leadership Styles Affect Teachers' Professional Well-being?, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 10099-10105
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i4.6180

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Principal leadership styles essentially refer to the process of influencing the school climate, teachers' views and actions about teaching, and teachers' academic accomplishments. The challenges of principal leadership style in an educational institution have made principals' behavior one of the key elements in enhancing teachers' professional well-being. However, there are currently few and limited discussions on principal leadership styles in the context of teachers and their professional well-being. To provide a deeper understanding, this concept paper analyzes principal leadership styles from the perspective of teachers and their sense of fulfillment from the teaching profession. The focus of this concept paper centers on the role, potential, and growth of principal leadership styles, especially in the context of teachers and how they might help raise teachers' level of professional satisfaction. The consideration in this concept paper is to improve the theoretical and practical implications, particularly in relation to principals' conduct of leadership, and stimulate further research in this area.

Keywords: Education: Principal Leadership Styles; Teacher Professional Well-being.

Introduction

The importance of principals' leadership in schools is undeniable because leaders play a crucial role in influencing the individual, organization, and the broader educational system. The significance of a principal's leadership is inherent in the function of the principal itself. Furthermore, Blanchard (2020) highlighted that in recent times, specifically 2020, the impact of leaders' actions and decisions and the significance of leadership accountability have gained prominence and have become increasingly evident in the daily experiences of people the world over. Leadership style is one of the key factors affecting performance of any organization and its employees (Khan et al., 2014). The principal, due to their highest position in the educational hierarchy, is expected to provide most of the occupational support in the school setting. Moreover, the actual behavior of organizational leaders is critical in influencing work behavior, new ideas, and job satisfaction among employees (Haque et al., 2021).

Earlier studies have demonstrated that the school climate, teachers' views about leadership, teachers' turnover rate, and students' academic accomplishments are all influenced by the principal's leadership styles (Urlick, 2016). Clearly, leadership behaviors not only serve to develop a leader's leadership abilities but also induce or encourage individuals to perform more efficiently and effectively. Thus, a principal's actions should align closely with their leadership styles, as proposed by Pinkas and Bulić (2017). Leadership, which is often perceived as the ability to manage schools, inspire and persuade others to use their skills and efforts toward attaining the set objectives, is imperative for ensuring that assigned tasks are completed efficaciously.

However, Smith (2019), based on his study, highlighted that during the initial interviews with principals, it was apparent that many were still engaged in regular, routine office activities rather than actively assisting, encouraging, and motivating teachers to put in the extra effort to meet educational objectives by

employing effective teaching strategies as well as addressing other performance-related matters. Prior studies show that the capacity to survive a position is associated with primary leadership styles as well as performance and the financial need for employment (Baig et al., 2021). Hence, the leadership role is crucial in inspiring subordinates and forging genuine mutual agreements on the methods and goals needed to meet the requirements and intended objectives of employees (Kafka, 2009).

To get a better understanding about the principal leadership styles, this concept paper pinpoints that how principals' behaviors might enhance teachers' professional well-being and also examines the ways in which administrators' actions could improve the standard of teachers' professional well-being in China. This paper not only intends to draw the attention of the community and educational policymakers toward enhancing the nation's educational delivery system, but also provide the theoretical contributions for future research on principal leadership style and its effect on teachers' well-being in terms of practically and conceptually beneficial.

Definition of Principals' Leadership Styles

The concept of leadership encompasses a series of actions intended to improve follower development, foster social interactions, and elevate professional work practices. To improve an organization's overall performance, it is vital to have both leaders and followers who can contribute and add value, as well as utilize crucial resources for the benefit of the organization (Northouse, 2018). Consequently, leadership and in particular, prominent leadership styles have attracted the attention of researchers worldwide due to its significant impact on organizations.

A leadership style refers to the approach or method adopted to influence the behavior and feelings of organizational members or subordinates to achieve excellent performance outcomes. It's widely believed that a leader's leadership style is crucial, in addition to the organization's development plan and the dedication of their team members. It's widely believed that a leader's style of leadership is crucial, in addition to the organization's development plan and the dedication of their team members (Hai et al., 2021). School principals impact the performance of instructors through their style of leadership directly or indirectly (Saleem et al., 2020). Principals are responsible for the school's administration, guiding teachers accordingly to meet the set objectives, whereby their leadership styles reflect the distinct approach that the principals employ to fulfil their duties (Ch,A.H. et al., 2017). Effectively mastering and implementing a leadership style into organizational leadership practices is crucial for boosting employee engagement levels and for strategically adapting to the dynamically changing leadership circumstances (Kelly et al., 2019). An effective principal is often attuned to the needs of the teachers and endeavors to help teachers achieve their goals by means of direction, guidance and coaching. In short, leadership styles reflect a leader's ability to carry out tasks while receiving assistance from and working in concert with the school's employees (Adeyemi, 2010). In the education sector, research on leadership styles and teacher professional well-being are important issues because not only can it assist school management but also plays a significant role in improving teachers' sense of contentment in their profession.

Definition of Teachers' Professional Well-being

Teacher professional well-being refers to how instructors respond to the demands of their work socially and emotionally (Viac and Fraser, 2020). Numerous perspectives have been involved to investigate teacher well-being, including the demands placed on teachers, job satisfaction, involvement at work, self-worth, working conditions for teachers, and enjoyment in the workplace (Brady and Wilson, 2020). Teachers' well-being is defined as the ideal psychological functioning and work experience, which comprise the presence of favorable characteristics such as job satisfaction or work passion, and the lack of negative aspects such as stress and emotional weariness. Teachers' well-being is influenced by their employment and working environment. This is supported by McCallum (2017) who noted that the behavior of coworkers, administrators, and students, as well as the workplace environment, can all have a significant impact on teachers' subjective and psychological well-being.

Principals' Leadership Styles Theory

The Path-Goal Theory (PGT) can be used to describe how principal leadership styles affect teachers' professional well-being. PGT was created and then refined by House (1971) with the intention of identifying a leader's most used style as a means of motivating followers to achieve goals. The foundation of PGT is the idea that motivated leaders have an impact on workforce satisfaction. PGT considers four leadership styles leading to tremendous indicators of leader effectiveness. According to the PGT, leaders who with the guidance of the following four leadership styles will inspire and fulfill workers in a particular situation. The PGT examines how leaders motivate their followers to achieve specific goals. According to this perspective, effective leadership creates a clear and accessible path to the desired outcome through coaching and direction, removes barriers to success, and enhances the personal satisfaction derived from the task itself. PGT's principal leadership styles comprise four distinct leadership styles, namely directive, participative, supportive, and achievement-oriented leadership.

Northouse(2018) explained that directive leadership refers to a leader who clearly communicates expectations for follower tasks, such as performance standards, rules, and regulations, to the followers, essentially telling them what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and when to finish. In the context of principal leadership, a directive principal typically gives task commands without including teachers in significant administrative decisions or policy-making in schools. Olowoselu et al. (2019) elaborated that principals who use a directive leadership style will often set specific tasks for teachers and gives instruction on how the tasks should be completed.

Contrastingly, a leader who practices supportive leadership is cordial and approachable. Supportive leadership places a strong emphasis on the requirements of the followers in terms of their well-being, equality of treatment, respect and acknowledgment, as well as the creation of a pleasant working environment. Additionally, under supportive leadership, teachers are provided the opportunity to offer proposals and ideas to the administrators or take part in important policy-making, decision-making, and execution processes (Northouse, 2018).

Participative leadership refers to a leader who asks their followers to weigh in on important decisions, share in the decision-making process, and participate in policy-making. A participative leader seeks feedback from followers and considers their perspectives on their roles before finalizing job-related processes (Northouse, 2018).

Achievement-oriented leadership describes leaders who focus on achieving their goals of establishing specific objectives with the possibility for high performance standards; additionally, they have strong belief in the competency of their subordinates, and prioritize continuous performance development (Northouse, 2018). Principals with participative leadership style combine teacher's knowledge and imagination to find answers to issues by seeking their opinions, ideas, and suggestions. According to Atif Saleem et al. (2020), principals can set targets and goals that inspire teachers' engagement, energy, and motivation with the aid of achievement-oriented leadership style.

PGT leadership styles encourage leaders to set clear goals, clarify pathways, remove barriers, and support followers to increase productivity and achieve goal completion (Northouse, 2018). The approach is executed in a practical, objective, and functional manner. By placing a strong emphasis on teacher motivation, this leadership approach supports improved work performance. Northouse (2018) clarified that PGT leadership styles increase followers' performance outcome and inspires people to achieve goals.

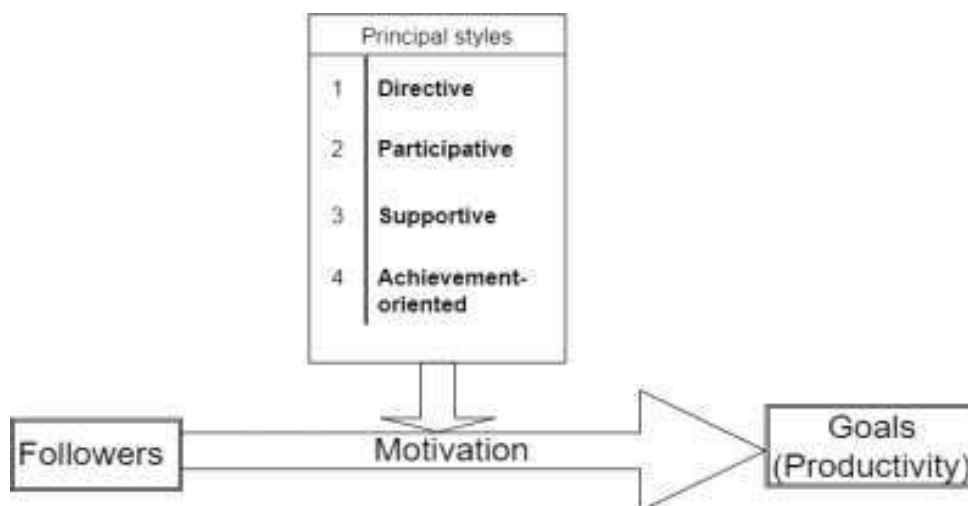


Figure 1: 4-Dimensions of PGT Leadership Theory FrameworkSource: Adopted from House (2018)

Teachers' Professional Well-being Model

Teacher professional well-being refers to the continuous positive experiences that teachers gain when their needs are satisfied, their abilities are enhanced, they engage in personal development, and they align with social expectations in their profession. Its dimensions consist of four aspects: cognitive well-being, subjective well-being, physical and mental well-being, and social well-being (OECD, 2020). The Four-Dimensional Model of teacher professional well-being proposed by Li Gang et al. (2020) is illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2: The Dimensions of Teacher Professional Well-being

Cognitive well-being refers to the process of acquiring or understanding factual knowledge, including attention, knowledge formation, problem solving, decision-making and other related content. Teachers' cognitive well-being refers to a series of knowledge and skills that teachers should be qualified for effective work. Its core elements focus on teachers' cognitive abilities, especially the ability level reflected by teachers' self-efficacy and concentration on work. The OECD uses two key indicators to evaluate teachers' cognitive well-being, namely the ability to focus on work and self-efficacy (Li Guang et al., 2022).

Subjective well-being indicates an individual's psychological state, encompassing a person's positive or negative emotional response to their life experiences. Three key elements define subjective well-being. Firstly, life evaluation, which represents an individual's reflective evaluation of their life or specific areas of it. Secondly, emotional state, which captures an individual's emotional state or specific feelings at a given point in time. Thirdly, happiness realization, which expresses an individual's perception of the meaning and purpose of life, or overall mental state (OECD, 2013).

Physical and mental well-being is the basic foundation to a fulfilling life. The state of a teacher's physical and mental health can be assessed by the frequency of occurrence of psychological symptoms and other physical and mental manifestations. As explained by Hopper (2020), when physiological requirements such as hunger and sleep are met, a new set of needs emerges, which include personal security, resources, health, and property. The work pressure experienced by teachers may lead to teachers' physical and mental discomfort. Thus, the OECD measures teachers' well-being based on their physical and mental health. In this context, the dimension is measured by assessing teachers' professional satisfaction and satisfaction with their work environment.

Social well-being concerns the frequency of contact between teachers and others (students, colleagues, principals, etc.), whereby the quality of these mutual relationships can influence teachers' professional well-being positively or negatively. Social well-being mainly focuses on the teacher's relationship with colleagues, students and principals, which are central to their professional well-being (Li Guang et al., 2022). More importantly, a teacher's sense of trust in their role as a teacher is paramount. A positive workplace culture not only cultivate trust but also fulfills deeper emotional and interpersonal requirements. Hence, Jerome (2013) maintained that self-actualization requirements are met when management propels employees to attain their maximum potential, which can be achieved through a constructive connection with the organization's management. In conclusion, principal leadership styles that attempt to inspire teachers by enhancing their inner potential or feelings can foster a sense of responsibility and motivate teachers to work effectively and efficiently toward enhancing their self-efficacy.

How Can Principals' Leadership Styles Help to Improve Teachers' Professional Well-being in China?

Within an educational institution, the leadership style of the principal is regarded as one of the most crucial elements in maintaining the efficacy of the school and supporting the continuous professional growth of instructors. Many believe that the culture of schools and the roles played by leaders are essential in promoting teaching and learning practice, supporting teachers' advancements and innovations (Lunenburt and Ornstein, 2021). The emotional relationships between leader and follower determine teachers' perceptions and feelings about their principal (Hallinger et al., 2019). Therefore, it is not unexpected that a wealth of studies indicates a close link between principal leadership styles and teacher job effectiveness (Adeyemi, 2010; Imhangbe et al., 2018; Saleem et al., 2020).

Teacher well-being has been characterized in a variety of ways. Collie et al. (2015) identify teacher well-being as positive evaluations in their employment. Turner and Thielking (2019) illustrate that positive school culture is associated with teacher well-being in terms of instructional quality, students' enthusiasm to learn, and academic achievement. Research has shown that interventions in professional development can boost teachers' work satisfaction, self-efficacy, well-being and performance. According to McCallum (2020), the job environment, as well as the actions of coworkers, supervisors, and students, can significantly affect teachers' psychological and subjective well-being. Along the same line, Dreer (2022) asserted that positive workplace environments aid in teachers' ascent to better states of well-being.

A successful leader equips their team to overcome obstacles and accomplish objectives (Phuc et al., 2021). In contrast, teachers may find it difficult to achieve their shared objectives if a leader has an ineffective leadership style. In fact, a lot of instructors frequently decide to voluntarily leave their jobs because of the unfavorable actions of school leaders (Bickmore and Dowell, 2018). Heidmets and Liik (2014) looked into the influence of a principal's leadership style on teachers' burnout, ambiguity about their career paths, and willingness to leave the teaching or professional field. Oplatka and Arar (2018) noted the shortcomings in a principal's leadership can hamper some individuals from performing or educating learners effectively. The current challenges of teacher shortages, the gradual decline of teacher status, as well as the waning levels of job satisfaction and passion for teaching have all impelled local and international academics to increasingly focus on these issues (Rizvi and Khamis, 2020).

Moreover, improving teacher well-being is paramount in this new era that emphasizes individuals' well-being. Against this background, focusing on teachers' well-being and contentment conforms to the broader objectives and important prerequisites of nurturing individuals of moral integrity and elevating the quality of education (Cui Yun, 2016). A teacher's professional well-being is not only influenced by their own personality traits, values, salary and school support, but also by the leadership style of the principal, which has both a direct and indirect effect on a teacher's professional well-being. In other words, strong principal leadership enables teachers to meet expectations at work in a more time- and cost-efficient manner.

Undoubtedly, literature has demonstrated that the principal's role is vital to enhance the sense of satisfaction associated with the teaching profession. Figure 3 depicts the linkages of different principal leadership styles and their direct impact on the level of teacher professional well-being. For instance, a directive leadership style may lead to high levels of mental state through enhancement of positive influence on teacher cognitive well-being and social well-being. Meanwhile, supportive leadership style may lead to high levels of teaching efficacy, job satisfaction and foster strong relationships with others, consequently elevating cognitive, subjective and social well-being. Participative leadership style may nurture excellent support systems with administrators and a high degree of enthusiasm. Finally, achievement-oriented leadership style may propel teachers toward a higher level of teacher professional well-being.

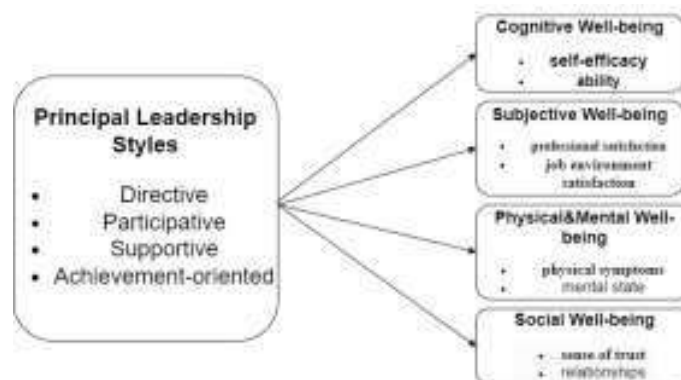


Figure 3: The Effect of PLS on TPW
Source: Adopted from Li Gang et al. (2020)

In conclusion, school principals typically use a variety of leadership philosophies to provide support in the administrative and academic spheres by giving clear instructions and guidelines. Analyzing the associations and impacts of the main leadership philosophies between principal leadership styles and teacher professional well-being shows how to be a great leader by providing a clear set of instructions or plans, including when to implement them and how to inspire followers, to achieve the ambitious goals, and cultivate amicable, constructive relationships. It is evident that principals' leadership styles have an impact on teachers' professional well-being because they influence instructional activities and interactions, which are intricately linked to each other.

Conclusion

This concept paper mainly aims to explore principal leadership styles regarding the definition, role and its importance on teachers' professional well-being and the quality of education. To enhance teachers' professional well-being and in turn, the educational administration system, this paper outlines four characteristics of principal leadership styles, namely directive leadership, participative leadership, supportive leadership, and achievement-oriented leadership. A positive impact will be imparted on the four following main dimensions of teacher professional well-being: cognitive well-being, subjective well-being, physical and mental well-being, and social well-being. The discussion has shown that principal leadership styles can play a pivotal role in improving teachers' professional well-being under the guidance of path-goal theory. Moreover, this concept paper has identified a notable gap in China in terms of the impact of principal leadership styles on teachers' professional well-being. However, in consideration of the lack of research, It's potential to further explore the relationship between principal leadership styles and teachers' professional well-being. One significant area which remains under-investigated is the implications of principals adopting dominant leadership styles.

References

1. Adeniyi, S. O., Fakolade, O. A., & Tella, A. 2010. Perceived causes of job stress among special educators in selected special and integrated schools in Nigeria. *New Horizons in Education*, 58(2), 73-82.
2. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ966651>.
3. Atif Saleem , Sarfraz Aslam.2020.Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance: Viewpoint of Middle Management[J].*Sustainability* 2020, 12:3-15.
4. Blanchard, K. 2020. Is Responsible Leadership Possible? Exploring the Experiences of Business Leaders, Educators, and Scholars.
5. Baig, S. A., Iqbal, S., Abrar, M., Baig, I., A., Amjad, F., et al. 2021. Impact of leadership styles on employees' performance with moderating role of positive psychological capital. *Total Q. Manag. Bus. Excell.* 32, 1085–1105.doi: 10.1080/14783363.2019.1665011.
6. Brady J and Wilson E.2020. Teacher wellbeing in England: teacher responses to school-level initiatives. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 36(3): 1–19.
7. Bickmore, D. L., and Dowell, M. M.2018.Understanding teacher turnover in two charter schools: principal dispositions and practices. *Int. J. Leader. Educ.* 22, 387–405. doi: 10.1080/13603124.2018.1481528.
8. Collie K,Shapka J D,Perry N E,et al.2015.Teacher well-being: Exploring its components and a practice-oriented scale[J].*Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*,33 (8) :744-756.
9. Ch,A.H., Ahmad,S.,Malik,M.,&Batool,A.2017.Principals' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Job Satisfaction: A Correlation Study at Secondary Level. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 39(3),45-56.
10. Cui Yun.2016. Investigation and research on factors affecting teachers' subjective well-being[J]. *Shanghai Education and Research*, (7): 56-60.
11. Dreer, B. 2022. Teacher well-being: Investigating the contributions of school climate and job crafting. *Cogent Educ.* 9:2044583. doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2022. 2044583.
12. Haque, A. U., and Yamoah, F. A. 2021. The role of ethical leadership in managing occupational stress to promote innovative work behaviour: a cross-cultural management perspective. *Sustainability* 13, 9608. doi: 10.3390/su13179608.
13. Hallinger P, Liu S and Piyaman P .2019. Does principal leadership make a difference in teacher professional learning? A comparative study China and Thailand. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 49(3):341–357.
14. Hai, T. N., Van, T. T., & Thi, H. N. (2021). Relationship between transformational leadership style and leadership thinking of provincial administration leaders. *Emerging Science Journal*, 5(5), 714–730. doi:10.28991/esj-2021-01307.
15. Heidmets, M., & Liik, K. 2014. School principal leadership style and teacher' subjective well-being at school.Problems of Education in the 21St Century, 6240. Retrieved from <https://lopes.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ejh&AN=100210164&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
16. House, R.J.1971.A path–goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16,321-338.
17. Hopper, E. (2020, February 24). Maslow's hierarchy of needs explained. Christian World Media. http://www.christianworldmedia.com/client/docs/603_1585079540_17.pdf.
18. Imhangbe,O.,Okecha,R.,&Obozuwa,J.2018. Principals' leadership styles and teachers' job performance: Evidencefrom Edo State, Nigeria.
19. Educational Management Administration&Leadership,1741143218764178.
20. Jerome, N. 2013. Application of the Maslow's hierarchy of need theory: Impacts and implications on organizational culture, human resource, and employee's performance. *International Journal of*

- Business and Management Invention, 2(3), 39–45.
21. Khan, S., Asghar, M., & Zaheer, A. 2014. Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Job Satisfaction and Firm Financial Performance: A Study of Banking Sector in Islamabad, Pakistan. (5), 374-384.
 22. Kafka, J.2009. The principal leadership in historical perspective. Peabody J. Educ. 84, 318–330. doi: 10.1080/01619560902973506.
 23. Kelly, S., & MacDonald, P.2019. A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication.
 24. International Journal of Business Communication, 56(3), 432-448. doi:10.1177/2329488416664176.
 25. Li Gang, Lv Lijie. 2020.PISA2021 Assessment of Teachers' Professional Happiness: Framework and characteristics[J]. Chinese Examination, (11): 48-60.
 26. Li Guang, Gai Kuo.2022. Survey on professional happiness of primary and secondary school teachers[J] EducationalResearch,(02):13-27.
 27. Lunenburg, F. C., and Ornstein, A. 2021. Educational Administration:Concepts and Practices. Thousand Oaks, CA:SAGE Publications.
 28. McCallum,F., Price,D., Graham,A.,&Morrison,A.2017. Teacher well-being: A review of the literature. AIS: NSW,The University of Adelaide, Australia, 34.
 29. Olowoselu,A., Mohamad,M.bin,& Aboudahr, S.M.F.M. 2019.Path-Goal Theory and the application in EducationalManagement and Leadership. Education Quarterly Reviews, 2(2).
<http://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.02.02.77>.
 30. OECD.2020.The teachers' Well-being Conceptual Framework: Contributions from TALIS2018[R]. Paris:OECDPublishing, 2020:3.
 31. OECD.2013.OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being [EB/OL]. [2020-02-01].
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en>.
 32. Oplatka, I., and Arar, K. 2018. Increasing teacher and leader professionalism through emotion management and engagement. J. Prof. Capit. Commun. 3, 138–141. doi: 10.1108/JPC-07-2018-036.
 33. Pinkas G., Bulić A. 2017. Principal's leadership style, as perceived by teachers, in relation to teacher's experience factor of school climate in elementary schools. Human: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies, 7(2), 34–50.
 34. Phuc, T. Q. B., Parveen, K., Tran, D. T. T., and Nguyen, D. T. A. 2021. The linkage between ethical leadership and lecturer job satisfaction at a private higher education institution in Vietnam. J. Soc. Sci. Adv. 2, 39–50. doi: 10.52223/JSSA21-020202-12.
 35. Urick A. 2016. The influence of typologies of school leaders on teacher retention: A multilevel latent class analysis. Journal of Educational Administration, 54(4), 434–468.
 36. Viac C , Fraser P .2020. Teachers' well-being: A Framework for Data Collection and Analysis. [R]. Paris: OECD Publishing,23.
 37. Rizvi, N. F., and Khamis, A. 2020. Review of DFID and USAID initiatives for the development of teacher education in Pakistan. Compare 50, 1210–1221. doi: 10.1080/03057925.2019.1619447.
 38. Smith,J.2019.Personal Interview/ Interviewer: A. Saleem.
 39. Saleem, A., Aslam, S., Yin, H. B., and Rao, C. 2020. Principal leadership styles and teacher job performance: viewpoint of middle management. Sustainability 12, 3390. doi: 10.3390/su12083390.
 40. Turner K and Thielking M .2019. Teacher wellbeing: its effects on teaching practice and student learning. Issues in Educational Research 29(3): 938–960.
 41. Northouse,P.G. 2018.Leadership:Theory and practice:Sage publications.