

The Relationship Between School Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in China

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction within the Chinese educational context. Teacher job satisfaction is crucial for a productive educational environment, yet its dynamics in China, influenced by unique cultural and systemic factors, warrant deeper exploration. While existing research highlights the impact of various leadership styles, a comprehensive analysis of multiple styles and their differential effects on specific dimensions of teacher satisfaction, particularly within China's nuanced cultural landscape, remains limited. Employing a quantitative correlational survey design, this study will collect data from a multi-stage sample of approximately 800-1000 primary and secondary school teachers across diverse regions in China. Perceived leadership styles will be measured using adapted versions of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and instruments for instructional and distributed leadership. Teacher job satisfaction will be assessed using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. Anticipated findings suggest that transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership styles will positively and significantly predict overall and intrinsic teacher job satisfaction. Conversely, laissez-faire leadership is expected to negatively impact satisfaction, while transactional leadership may show a weaker, albeit positive, association primarily with extrinsic satisfaction. These results will underscore the substantial role of empowering and collaborative leadership in fostering teacher well-being, informing policy development, leadership training, and ultimately enhancing educational quality in China.

Keywords: School Leadership, Teacher Job Satisfaction, China, Transformational Leadership, Distributed Leadership

1. Introduction

Teacher job satisfaction is a critical factor in fostering a positive and productive educational environment. Satisfied teachers are more likely to be motivated, committed, and effective in their roles, ultimately contributing to improved student outcomes and overall school success (Cao et al., 2022). Conversely, low teacher job satisfaction can lead to increased attrition, reduced pedagogical innovation, and compromised student learning (Garametsi & Anastasiou, 2021). In China, where education plays a pivotal role in societal development and national progress, understanding the dynamics of teacher job satisfaction is of paramount importance (Haerens et al., 2022). The unique cultural context of Chinese education, influenced by a blend of traditional Confucian values and modern reform efforts, adds a layer of complexity to this phenomenon (Hussain & Khayat, 2021).

One of the most significant determinants of teacher job satisfaction is the leadership style employed by school principals and administrators (Liu et al., 2021). School leaders are central to shaping the organizational climate, fostering a sense of shared purpose, and providing the necessary support for teachers to thrive (Liu et al., 2021). The influence of leadership extends beyond administrative tasks, directly impacting teachers' professional development, self-efficacy, and overall well-being (Liu & Wong, 2023). In the hierarchical management structure often found in Chinese schools, the principal's leadership style holds considerable sway over the entire institution (Maheshwari, 2021). Therefore, investigating the relationship between school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in China is crucial for developing effective educational policies and improving the quality of teaching and learning across the nation.

Global and domestic trends in education highlight a growing emphasis on empowering teachers and fostering collaborative environments, shifting away from purely top-down, bureaucratic models (Liu et al., 2021). This shift is particularly relevant in China, where traditional leadership approaches rooted in Confucian pedagogy often emphasize

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authority and conformity (Garametsi & Anastasiou, 2021). While these traditional elements can contribute to order and discipline, there is a growing recognition of the need for leadership styles that promote innovation, critical thinking, and teacher agency (Cao et al., 2022). Consequently, contemporary research in China increasingly explores the efficacy of various leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, instructional, and distributed leadership, and their impact on teacher morale and satisfaction (Hussain & Khayat, 2021).

Transformational leadership, characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, has consistently been linked to higher levels of teacher job satisfaction in various contexts, including China (Haerens et al., 2022). This style empowers teachers, encourages their professional growth, and builds trust within the school community (Haerens et al., 2022). Similarly, instructional leadership, which focuses on curriculum, teaching, and learning processes, and distributed leadership, which involves sharing leadership responsibilities among various stakeholders, have also shown positive correlations with teacher job satisfaction in Chinese schools (Liu et al., 2021). These approaches foster a supportive school culture, enhance teacher self-efficacy, and promote collaboration, all of which are vital for teacher well-being and effectiveness (Maheshwari, 2021).

However, the influence of leadership styles on teacher job satisfaction is not monolithic and can be mediated by various factors. Studies have indicated that elements such as reward systems, teacher motivation, and job effectiveness can play significant mediating roles in the relationship between leadership and satisfaction (Cao et al., 2022). Moreover, the unique cultural nuances of China, including the historical emphasis on teacher morality, dedication, and self-sacrifice, may also influence how leadership is perceived and how it impacts teacher satisfaction (Liu & Wong, 2023). The challenges faced by Chinese education, such as intense academic pressure, rigid curricula, and an educational equity gap between urban and rural areas, further underscore the complexity of this relationship (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2020). Therefore, a comprehensive examination is needed to understand how specific leadership styles are adopted and perceived in the Chinese context and their direct and indirect effects on teacher job satisfaction. This study aims to contribute to this understanding by exploring the intricate interplay between school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in China, taking into account the unique characteristics of its educational landscape.

1.1 Research Gap and Significance

Despite a growing body of literature on school leadership and teacher job satisfaction globally, and an increasing focus on these topics within China, several critical research gaps persist, particularly when examining the unique socio-cultural and educational context of the country. A thorough understanding of these gaps highlights the significance of the proposed study.

Firstly, while numerous studies have explored the impact of specific leadership styles, such as transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership, on teacher job satisfaction in China (Garametsi & Anastasiou, 2021), there is still a need for comprehensive investigations that simultaneously analyze the interplay of multiple leadership styles and their differential effects. Many existing studies tend to focus on one or two dominant leadership styles in isolation, potentially overlooking the complex reality where principals often employ a blend of approaches (Haerens et al., 2022). Chinese school principals operate within a system that values both traditional hierarchical authority and modern, more collaborative approaches. How these different styles are integrated, prioritized, or even conflict within a single school environment, and their collective or individual impact on teachers' satisfaction, remains underexplored. For instance, while autocratic leadership has been found to be widely exercised in some Chinese schools and can positively impact teacher performance in certain aspects, its effect on job satisfaction, particularly intrinsic satisfaction, is less clear and warrants further investigation (Cao et al., 2022). This study aims to address this by examining a broader spectrum of leadership styles in a more holistic manner.

Secondly, much of the existing research, while acknowledging the Chinese context, may not fully capture the nuanced influences of traditional Confucian values, governmental policies, and the intense pressure of the Gaokao (national college entrance examination) on both leadership practices and teacher well-being (Hussain & Khayat, 2021). While some studies discuss the general impact of leadership on teacher satisfaction within the Chinese educational system, fewer delve deeply into how these specific cultural and systemic factors shape the perception and effectiveness of different leadership styles. For example, a leadership style that promotes teacher autonomy and shared decision-making, which is generally associated with higher job satisfaction in Western contexts, might be perceived differently or face unique implementation challenges within a more collectivistic and hierarchical Chinese culture (Liu et al., 2021). The mediating roles of cultural values, policy implementation, and organizational structures are often acknowledged but require more granular empirical evidence to fully understand their interplay. This study will strive to incorporate these contextual factors more explicitly in its analysis.

Thirdly, there is a recognized gap in understanding the specific dimensions of teacher job satisfaction that are most affected by different leadership styles in China. Teacher job satisfaction is a multi-faceted construct, encompassing intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors (Haerens et al., 2022). While some studies have examined overall job satisfaction, fewer have provided detailed insights into how various leadership styles disproportionately influence these specific intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions within Chinese schools (Garametsi & Anastasiou, 2021). For example, a transformational leader might significantly boost teachers' intrinsic satisfaction through intellectual stimulation and

individualized consideration, while a transactional leader might primarily impact extrinsic satisfaction through performance-based incentives. Understanding these differential impacts is crucial for school leaders to tailor their approaches more effectively to enhance specific aspects of teacher well-being.

Fourthly, while some studies have identified mediating factors like teacher self-efficacy and teacher collaboration in the relationship between distributed leadership and job satisfaction in China (Cao et al., 2022), there is still a need to explore a wider range of potential mediators and moderators across various leadership styles. Factors such as perceived organizational support, workload management, professional development opportunities, and teacher voice in decision-making are critical, yet their precise mediating or moderating roles in the Chinese context, concerning different leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction, require further empirical validation. For instance, how does the principal's role in mitigating excessive workload, a significant stressor for Chinese teachers, interact with different leadership styles to influence satisfaction? This study will aim to identify and analyze such mediating and moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive model of the relationship.

The significance of this study is multi-fold. Firstly, by addressing the identified research gaps, this study will contribute significantly to the existing theoretical frameworks on educational leadership and teacher job satisfaction, particularly by enriching the understanding within a non-Western, high-context cultural setting like China. The findings can refine existing models of leadership effectiveness by integrating cultural nuances and specific systemic pressures, thereby offering a more globally informed perspective on educational administration.

Secondly, on a practical level, the findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational administrators, and school principals in China. A clear understanding of which leadership styles and practices are most effective in fostering teacher job satisfaction can inform the development of targeted professional development programs for school leaders. By identifying the specific dimensions of satisfaction influenced by different leadership approaches, this research can guide principals in adopting strategies that enhance teacher morale, reduce burnout, and ultimately improve teacher retention, which is a significant concern in many educational systems, including China's (Haerens et al., 2022). Empowering teachers through supportive leadership is crucial for fostering innovation and adapting to ongoing educational reforms.

Thirdly, satisfied teachers are more likely to be engaged, creative, and committed to their profession, which directly translates into improved teaching quality and better student learning outcomes (Cao et al., 2022). By identifying leadership practices that promote teacher well-being, this study indirectly contributes to enhancing the overall quality of education in China. This is particularly relevant in a country where human capital development through education is a national priority.

Finally, this research holds comparative significance. The insights gained from the Chinese context can serve as a valuable reference for other countries with similar educational systems or cultural characteristics. Understanding how leadership dynamics play out in a collectivist, high-stakes testing environment can offer lessons and perspectives that are applicable beyond China's borders, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and learning in educational leadership research. By systematically exploring the complexities of leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in China, this study aims to offer both theoretical advancements and practical recommendations to enhance the educational landscape.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study has two primary research objectives

- 1) To identify and describe the prevalent school leadership styles adopted by principals in Chinese schools.
- 2) To investigate the relationship between these identified school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in Chinese educational settings.

1.3 Research Questions

This study has two primary research questions

- 1) What are the commonly practiced school leadership styles among principals in China?
- 2) How do these school leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction in Chinese schools?

2. Literature Review

The relationship between school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction has been a subject of extensive research across various educational contexts globally. This section provides a comprehensive review of the pertinent literature, focusing on key theoretical frameworks, prominent leadership styles, the conceptualization of teacher job satisfaction, and specific findings within the Chinese educational landscape.

Theoretical underpinnings for understanding leadership and job satisfaction often draw from established organizational behavior theories. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, for instance, distinguishes between (Hussain & Khayat, 2021). This theory suggests that while hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction, only motivators can lead to true satisfaction. In an educational context, school leadership plays a crucial role in influencing both sets of factors. Another relevant framework is Social Exchange Theory, which posits that relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges, implying that when principals engage in supportive and collaborative practices, teachers perceive greater value and respond with increased commitment and satisfaction (Garametsi & Anastasiou, 2021). Furthermore, Self-Determination

Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation and well-being, all of which can be significantly impacted by a principal's leadership style (Liu et al., 2021). These theories provide a robust foundation for examining how leadership behaviors translate into teacher satisfaction.

A central theme in leadership research is the categorization of leadership styles. Transformational leadership, often contrasted with transactional and laissez-faire leadership, is widely recognized for its positive impact on organizational outcomes, including employee satisfaction (Liu & Wong, 2023). Transformational leaders inspire, motivate, intellectually stimulate, and provide individualized consideration to their followers. In the educational sphere, this translates to principals who articulate a compelling vision, encourage innovative teaching practices, foster a sense of collective purpose, and personally support teachers' professional growth (Maheshwari, 2021). Numerous studies, both globally and in China, have consistently found a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and various aspects of teacher job satisfaction (Liu et al., 2021). For example, research in China has shown that transformational leadership positively predicts teacher job satisfaction and professional resilience (Maheshwari, 2021). This style is seen to empower teachers, enhance their commitment, and promote a positive school climate, ultimately contributing to higher levels of satisfaction with their work (Maheshwari, 2021).

Instructional leadership, another prominent style, focuses specifically on improving teaching and learning processes within the school (Hussain & Khayat, 2021). Principals adopting this style emphasize curriculum development, instructional supervision, and professional development opportunities for teachers. Research in China highlights the efficacy of instructional leadership in enhancing teacher job satisfaction. Studies suggest that principals who actively manage instructional programs and clearly articulate the school's mission contribute to a positive school organizational climate, which, in turn, enhances teacher satisfaction (Cao et al., 2022). The focus on pedagogical improvement and direct support for teaching practices appears to be a key driver of teacher morale and effectiveness.

Distributed leadership involves the sharing of leadership responsibilities among various stakeholders, including teachers, department heads, and other staff members (Haerens et al., 2022). This approach fosters a culture of shared responsibility, collaboration, and collective decision-making. In the Chinese context, distributed leadership has been found to have a markedly positive effect on teacher job satisfaction (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2020). Studies utilizing data from the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (Liu & Wong, 2023) in Shanghai have shown that distributed leadership positively impacts teachers' job satisfaction, particularly concerning their work environment and job content (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2020). The mediating roles of teacher collaboration and teacher self-efficacy have also been identified, suggesting that when leadership is distributed, teachers feel more empowered, collaborate more effectively, and experience increased self-efficacy, all of which contribute to higher satisfaction (Haerens et al., 2022).

In contrast to transformational and distributed styles, transactional leadership typically involves contingent reward systems and management by exception (Liu & Wong, 2023). While it can be effective in achieving specific goals and ensuring compliance, its impact on teacher job satisfaction is often less profound or even negative, particularly concerning intrinsic satisfaction (Liu et al., 2021). Some research in China has indicated that transactional leadership can positively correlate with teacher leadership indirectly through mediating factors like psychological capital (Voelkel, 2019). However, a purely transactional approach, without the elements of inspiration and individualized consideration, may not fully address teachers' professional and emotional needs, potentially leading to lower levels of overall job satisfaction (Maheshwari, 2021).

Teacher job satisfaction itself is a multifaceted construct, encompassing various dimensions. Intrinsic satisfaction refers to the feelings derived directly from the work itself, such as a sense of accomplishment, opportunities for growth, autonomy, and recognition. Extrinsic satisfaction, on the other hand, relates to factors external to the job, such as salary, benefits, working conditions, and administrative policies (Hussain & Khayat, 2021). Research consistently highlights the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in contributing to overall job satisfaction. In the Chinese context, factors like school atmosphere, psychological capital, and professional identity have been found to significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction (Liu et al., 2021). High workload and increasing demands, particularly in the context of online teaching or high-stakes examinations, have been identified as stressors that can negatively impact teacher satisfaction (Liu & Wong, 2023).

The unique cultural and systemic context of Chinese education significantly influences both leadership practices and teacher job satisfaction. Chinese culture, deeply rooted in Confucianism, traditionally emphasizes hierarchy, respect for authority, and collectivism (Liu et al., 2021). This historical influence often manifests in a more paternalistic or authoritarian leadership style in some schools, where principals hold considerable positional authority (Liu et al., 2021). While this can foster order and discipline, it may also limit teacher autonomy and participation in decision-making, potentially affecting intrinsic job satisfaction. However, contemporary reforms in Chinese education are promoting more collaborative and empowering leadership models, aiming to balance traditional values with modern pedagogical approaches (Cao et al., 2022). The pressure associated with the Gaokao (national college entrance examination) also exerts significant influence, leading to an exam-oriented environment that can increase teacher workload and stress, thereby impacting job satisfaction (Haerens et al., 2022).

Mediating factors also play a crucial role in the relationship between leadership and teacher job satisfaction in China. Studies have shown that reward systems, teacher motivation, and job effectiveness can mediate the association between leadership styles (instructional and distributed) and teacher job satisfaction (Hussain & Khayat, 2021). Similarly, teacher

self-efficacy and teacher collaboration have been identified as sequential mediators between distributed leadership and teacher job satisfaction (Garametsi & Anastasiou, 2021). These findings underscore that the impact of leadership is not always direct but often operates through intermediate psychological or organizational mechanisms.

In summary, the existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding the positive associations between transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction. It also highlights the less consistent or even negative impact of purely transactional or autocratic styles. However, the unique socio-cultural and educational context of China, characterized by Confucian traditions, a hierarchical system, and high academic pressure, necessitates a deeper and more nuanced investigation into how these leadership styles are manifested and perceived, and their precise impact on the various dimensions of teacher job satisfaction. This review underscores the importance of the proposed study in contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical applications within the specific landscape of Chinese education.

3. Research Method

This study will employ a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in China. A quantitative methodology is appropriate for this study as it allows for the systematic collection of numerical data, statistical analysis, and the identification of patterns, relationships, and the strength of associations between variables. This approach will enable the researchers to measure the prevalence of different leadership styles as perceived by teachers and to assess the levels of teacher job satisfaction, thereby allowing for rigorous statistical inferences regarding their relationship.

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study will be a correlational survey design. A correlational design is suitable for examining the nature and strength of the relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them (Cao et al., 2022). In this study, the primary variables are school leadership styles (independent variable) and teacher job satisfaction (dependent variable). A survey approach will be utilized to collect data from a large sample of teachers across various schools in China. This design will allow for the collection of data on perceptions of leadership behaviors and self-reported job satisfaction levels, providing a snapshot of the current state of affairs and enabling the identification of statistical associations. The cross-sectional nature of the survey will allow for efficient data collection from a diverse group of participants at a single point in time, providing a broad overview of the relationships under investigation.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprises all in-service teachers working in primary and secondary schools across China. Due to the vast geographical size and the large number of teachers in China, a representative sample will be drawn from this population. A multi-stage sampling technique will be employed to ensure representativeness and feasibility. Firstly, purposive sampling will be used to select several provinces or municipalities that represent diverse socio-economic and educational development levels within China. Secondly, within each selected province/municipality, stratified random sampling will be used to select a proportionate number of primary and secondary schools to ensure representation from both educational levels. Stratification will also consider school type. Finally, within each selected school, simple random sampling will be employed to select a predetermined number of teachers to participate in the study. The aim is to recruit a sample size of approximately 800-1000 teachers to ensure sufficient statistical power for analysis and to enhance the generalizability of the findings (Cao et al., 2022). Participation will be voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

3.3 Instrumentation

Data will be collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of several established and validated instruments adapted for the Chinese context. The questionnaire will be translated into Mandarin Chinese using a back-translation process to ensure linguistic and cultural equivalence. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot study will be conducted with a small sample of teachers (approximately 30-50) not included in the main sample. The pilot study will help assess the clarity of questionnaire items, the reliability of the scales within the Chinese context, and the time required for completion. Necessary adjustments will be made based on the pilot study results to enhance the validity and reliability of the instruments. All measures will be selected or adapted to ensure cultural appropriateness and theoretical alignment with the study's objectives.

4. Findings and Discussions

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for various dimensions of leadership styles as perceived by the study participants. The table organizes leadership into four main categories: Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Distributed Leadership, and Transactional Leadership, with sub-dimensions for each. The "Mean (\bar{X})" column indicates the average rating for each leadership dimension on a Likert scale, presumably ranging from 1 to 5, where higher values suggest a stronger perception of that particular style. The "Standard Deviation (SD)" column measures the spread or

variability of these ratings around the mean. Analysis of the dummy data in this table reveals that Transformational Leadership is perceived as the most prevalent style among principals, with an overall mean of 3.95 and relatively low standard deviations across its sub-dimensions (e.g., Idealized Influence at 4.01, Individualized Consideration at 4.00).

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived Leadership Styles

Leadership Style Dimension	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (SD)
<i>Transformational Leadership</i>	3.95	0.62
Idealized Influence	4.01	0.70
Inspirational Motivation	3.88	0.75
Intellectual Stimulation	3.92	0.68
Individualized Consideration	4.00	0.65
<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	3.78	0.71
Defines Mission	3.90	0.72
Manages Curriculum and Instruction	3.65	0.80
Promotes Professional Development	3.79	0.75
<i>Distributed Leadership</i>	3.52	0.85
Shared Vision & Goals	3.60	0.88
Teacher Empowerment	3.45	0.90
Collaborative Decision-Making	3.51	0.87
<i>Transactional Leadership</i>	3.20	0.90
Contingent Reward	3.35	0.95
Management by Exception (Active)	3.05	0.98
Management by Exception (Passive)	2.80	1.10

This indicates that teachers generally view their principals as highly inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and individually considerate. Instructional Leadership also shows a strong presence with an overall mean of 3.78, suggesting principals are actively involved in defining the school's mission (3.90) and promoting professional development (3.79), although managing curriculum and instruction has a slightly lower mean (3.65). Distributed Leadership has a moderate mean of 3.52, implying that while some aspects like shared vision (3.60) are present, teacher empowerment (3.45) and collaborative decision-making (3.51) could be more widely practiced. Finally, Transactional Leadership appears less dominant with an overall mean of 3.20. Within this category, Contingent Reward (3.35) is more frequently perceived than Management by Exception (Active at 3.05, Passive at 2.80), suggesting that principals are more likely to offer rewards for performance than to intervene only when issues arise. The relatively higher standard deviations for transactional leadership sub-dimensions, especially Management by Exception (Passive) at 1.10, suggest a wider range of perceptions among teachers regarding these behaviors, indicating less consistent application or varied experiences. Overall, the data implies a leaning towards more empowering and developmental leadership styles (transformational, instructional) over purely directive or passive ones.

Table 2 presents the results of a statistical analysis designed to determine how different leadership styles independently predict the overall job satisfaction of teachers. The table includes several key statistical metrics for each leadership style dimension: Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Distributed Leadership, and Transactional Leadership. The Beta (β) coefficient indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between each leadership style and overall teacher job satisfaction, when other leadership styles are held constant. A positive beta value means that as the perception of that leadership style increases, so does teacher job satisfaction.

Table 2 . Multiple Regression Analysis of Leadership Styles Predicting Overall Teacher Job Satisfaction

Leadership Style Dimension	Beta (β)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	p-value	R-squared
Transformational Leadership	.45*	0.05	9.00	<.001	.58
Instructional Leadership	.28*	0.04	7.00	<.001	-
Distributed Leadership	.18*	0.03	6.00	<.001	-
Transactional Leadership	.05	0.02	2.50	.013	-

The Standard Error (SE) measures the accuracy of the beta coefficient. The t-value is a test statistic used to determine if the beta coefficient is significantly different from zero, and the p-value indicates the probability of observing a t-value as extreme as, or more extreme than, the one calculated, assuming that there is no relationship between the variables in the population. A p-value less than 0.05 (or other set significance level) typically suggests statistical significance. Finally, the R-squared value (0.58 in this table) represents the proportion of the variance in overall teacher job satisfaction that

can be explained by the combined leadership styles included in the model. Based on the dummy data presented, Transformational Leadership shows the strongest positive and statistically significant predictive power for overall teacher job satisfaction, with a beta coefficient of 0.45 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This suggests that principals who exhibit transformational behaviors are strongly associated with higher teacher job satisfaction. Instructional Leadership also significantly and positively predicts job satisfaction ($\beta=0.28$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a focus on teaching and learning processes contributes positively. Similarly, Distributed Leadership has a significant positive impact ($\beta=0.18$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that shared leadership responsibilities enhance teacher satisfaction. Transactional Leadership shows a smaller, but still statistically significant, positive beta coefficient (0.05, $p = 0.013$), implying a minor positive influence, likely through clear expectations and rewards. The overall model's R-squared of 0.58 indicates that 58% of the variance in overall teacher job satisfaction can be explained by these combined leadership styles, suggesting a substantial explanatory power of the model. These findings collectively highlight that more empowering and collaborative leadership styles (Transformational, Instructional, Distributed) are key drivers of teacher job satisfaction, with transactional aspects having a comparatively weaker, though still present, influence.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between school leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction within the unique educational context of China. By quantitatively investigating prevalent leadership styles and their impact on various dimensions of teacher satisfaction, the research seeks to address existing gaps in the literature. The anticipated findings, as illustrated by the dummy data, suggest that empowering and collaborative leadership styles, particularly transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership, are likely to be strong positive predictors of teacher job satisfaction, especially its intrinsic facets. Conversely, more traditional or passive approaches like laissez-faire leadership are expected to have a negative impact, while transactional leadership may exhibit a more limited or context-dependent positive influence, primarily on extrinsic satisfaction. The high explanatory power suggested by the R-squared value in the regression analysis indicates that school leadership plays a substantial role in shaping the overall job satisfaction of Chinese teachers. These conclusions, once empirically validated, will underscore the critical importance of effective leadership in fostering a positive and sustainable teaching environment in Chinese schools, contributing significantly to both theoretical knowledge and practical application within the global educational landscape. The study's focus on the Chinese context, considering its unique cultural and systemic pressures, will offer valuable insights into how leadership efficacy can be maximized to support teacher well-being and, consequently, improve educational outcomes in a high-stakes environment.

5.1 Implementation

The findings of this study have several practical implications for various stakeholders within the Chinese educational system. For school principals and administrators, the research will serve as a guide to developing more effective leadership practices. If transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership styles are confirmed as key drivers of teacher job satisfaction, principals will be encouraged to adopt and strengthen these approaches. This includes fostering shared vision, promoting teacher professional development, empowering teachers in decision-making, and providing individualized support. Training programs for aspiring and current principals should be redesigned to emphasize these effective leadership competencies, moving beyond purely administrative or hierarchical models. For policymakers and educational authorities, the study's results can inform the development of national and provincial policies that support teacher well-being and professional growth. Policies could focus on creating conditions that enable principals to practice more empowering leadership, such as providing resources for professional development, encouraging school-based management initiatives, and reviewing teacher workload to alleviate stressors that negatively impact satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings can inform the design of teacher evaluation systems that recognize and reward teacher engagement and satisfaction as outcomes of effective leadership. Ultimately, by enhancing teacher job satisfaction through improved leadership, the Chinese education system can expect to see increased teacher retention, reduced burnout, improved teaching quality, and ultimately, better student learning outcomes, thereby contributing to the overall strength of China's human capital development.

5.2 Future Research

This study, while comprehensive, also paves the way for several avenues of future research. Firstly, given its cross-sectional design, future studies could employ longitudinal designs to explore how changes in leadership styles over time impact teacher job satisfaction and to establish stronger causal relationships. This would provide deeper insights into the dynamic nature of leadership influence. Secondly, future research could explore the mediating and moderating roles of additional variables not fully explored in this study, such as organizational culture, teacher self-efficacy, psychological capital, or specific school policies. Understanding these complex interactions would provide a more nuanced picture of the leadership-satisfaction link. Thirdly, while this study uses quantitative methods, qualitative research could offer richer, more contextualized insights into the lived experiences of teachers and the challenges and successes of implementing different leadership styles in diverse Chinese school settings. This would provide a deeper understanding of the "why" behind the quantitative findings. Finally, comparative studies across different regions within China or even

internationally with other East Asian countries could reveal how cultural, socio-economic, and political contexts further shape the relationship between school leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Such research would contribute to a more universal understanding of effective educational leadership.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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