

**The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction
in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

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You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely,

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Abstract

The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan

While international research has examined how different leadership practices affect teacher motivation and retention, empirical evidence within the Kazakhstani context remains limited. This study explores the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Drawing on Bass's (1985) Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory, along with alternative frameworks such as authoritarian, democratic, distributed, ethical, people-oriented, and task-oriented leadership, the study uses a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with one school principal and five teachers.

Thematic analysis revealed that both the principal and teachers view leadership as a central factor influencing job satisfaction. The principal associated satisfaction with fairness, trust, creativity, and intrinsic motivation, while teachers emphasised recognition, professional growth, collegiality, and emotional support.

Transformational leadership behaviours, such as idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, were particularly impactful, although transactional elements were also noted, with mixed responses. Distributed and ethical leadership practices were generally viewed positively, though some participants noted instances of pressure or limited emotional support.

The findings suggest that a balanced and context-sensitive leadership approach fosters a more supportive school environment and enhances teacher satisfaction. The thesis concludes by offering practical implications for educational practice, school leadership, and

policy development in Kazakhstan's public-school context, and suggests avenues for further research.

Keywords: principal leadership styles, teacher job satisfaction, transformational leadership, transactional leadership.

Аңдатпа

Алматы қаласындағы мемлекеттік мектептегі директордың көшбасшылық стильдері мен мұғалімдердің жұмысқа қанағаттануы арасындағы байланыс

Халықаралық зерттеулер әртүрлі көшбасшылық дағдыларының мұғалімдердің ынтасы мен жұмыста қалуына қалай әсер ететінін зерттегенімен, Қазақстандық контексте эмпирикалық дәлелдер шектеулі. Бұл зерттеу Алматы қаласындағы мемлекеттік мектептегі директордың көшбасшылық стильдері мен мұғалімдердің жұмысқа қанағаттануы арасындағы байланысты қарастырады.

Басс (1985) ұсынған Трансформациялық және транзакциялық басқару теориясына, сондай-ақ авторитарлық, демократиялық, бөлінген, этикалық, адамға және тапсырмаға бағытталған басқару сияқты баламалы көшбасшылық стильдерге сүйене отырып, зерттеу сапалық кейс-стади зерттеу әдісін қолданады. Деректер бір мектеп директорымен және бес мұғаліммен жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттар арқылы жиналды. Тематикалық талдау директор мен мұғалімдердің көшбасшылықтың жұмысқа қанағаттануға әсер ететін орталық фактор деп санайтынын көрсетті.

Директор қанағаттануды әділдікпен, сеніммен, шығармашылықпен және ішкі уәждемемен байланыстырады, ал мұғалімдер жұмыспен қанағаттануда, кәсіби өсуді, әріптестікті және эмоционалдық қолдауды ерекше атап өтеді. Мұғалімдер үшін трансформациялық басқару аспектілері, оның ішінде идеалдандырылған ықпал, интеллектуалды ынталандыру және жекелендірілген көңіл бөлу, әсіресе әсерлі болып көрінді, дегенмен транзакциялық элементтер де аталып өтілді, оған қатысты пікірлер аралас болды. Бөлінген және этикалық басқару тәжірибелері жалпы жағымды қабылданды, алайда кейбір қатысушылар қысымның барлығын және эмоциялық қолдаудың жеткіліксіздігін атап өтті.

Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері мектеп басшылығының теңгерімді және контекске бейімделген стилі мұғалімдердің жұмысына қанағаттануын арттырып, қолайлы мектеп ортасын қалыптастыруға септігін тигізетінін көрсетеді. Диссертация Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік мектептерге арналған білім беру практикасы, басшылық және білім саясаты бойынша нақты ұсыныстар ұсынып, болашақ зерттеулерге бағыт беріп, қорытындалады.

Түйінді сөздер: директордың басқару стильдері, мұғалімдердің жұмысқа қанағаттануы, трансформациялық басқару, транзакциялық басқару.

Аннотация

Взаимосвязь между стилями руководства директора и удовлетворенностью работой учителей в государственной школе города Алматы, Казахстан

В то время как международные исследования изучали, как различные практики руководства влияют на мотивацию и удержание учителей в профессии, ограниченные эмпирические данные существуют в казахстанском контексте. Данное исследование изучает взаимосвязь между стилями руководства директора и удовлетворенностью работой учителей в государственной школе города Алматы, Казахстан. Опираясь на

Опираясь на теорию трансформационного и транзакционного лидерства Басса (1985), а также на альтернативные концепции, такие как авторитарное, демократическое, распределенное, этическое, ориентированное на людей и решение конкретных задач лидерство, в исследовании используется качественный метод кейс-стади. Данные были собраны посредством полу структурированных интервью с одним директором школы и пятью учителями. Тематический анализ показал, что как директор, так и учителя считают руководство центральным фактором, влияющим на удовлетворенность работой.

Директор связывает удовлетворенность со справедливостью, доверием, креативностью и внутренней мотивацией, в то время как учителя подчеркивают признание, профессиональный рост, коллегиальность и эмоциональную поддержку. Трансформационные модели поведения руководства, такие как идеализированное влияние, интеллектуальное стимулирование и индивидуализированное внимание, были признаны особенно значимыми. Тем не менее, транзакционные элементы также были отмечены, с неоднозначными отзывами. Практики распределенного и этического руководства в целом были восприняты положительно, в то время как моменты

давления или ограниченной эмоциональной поддержки были упомянуты некоторыми участниками.

Результаты исследования показывают, что сбалансированный и контекстный стиль лидерства способствует созданию более поддерживающей школьной среды и повышению удовлетворенности учителей. В заключении данной работы представлены практические рекомендации для образовательной практики, школьного руководства и разработки политики в системе государственных школ Казахстана, а также предложены направления для дальнейших исследований.

Ключевые слова: стили руководства директора, удовлетворенность работой учителей, трансформационное лидерство, транзакционное лидерство.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The thesis explores the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Given the crucial role that school leadership plays in shaping teacher motivation and job satisfaction, this study explores how principal's leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction in a Kazakhstani educational context.

Teacher job satisfaction is one of the key factors in teacher retention and the overall effectiveness of educational institutions (Perrachione et al., 2008; Rana et al., 2023; Sinoy, 2024). Previous research has demonstrated that leadership styles, particularly transformational and transactional leadership, significantly impact teachers' workplace experiences. While transformational leadership is often linked to higher job satisfaction by emphasising support, motivation, and professional growth, transactional leadership, with its structured and performance-based approach, has shown mixed effects. However, there is a lack of empirical research examining these leadership dynamics within Kazakhstan's unique educational landscape.

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore the perspectives of both teachers and the principal regarding leadership practices and job satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews provide in-depth insights into how leadership behaviours influence teachers' professional experiences, engagement, and long-term commitment to the field.

This chapter provides an overview of the study, including its background, problem statement, research questions, and significance. It outlines the rationale behind investigating principal leadership in Kazakhstan and highlights the potential contributions of the study to educational policy and leadership training. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure, guiding the reader through the subsequent chapters.

Education is a strategic priority for Kazakhstan. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (2024) has emphasised that the accessibility and quality of the education system directly influence the country's human capital development, labour productivity, and global competitiveness. Based on this understanding, Kazakhstan has implemented a series of educational reforms to improve teaching quality, accountability, and student achievement. These reforms place increasing demands on teachers, who are expected to act as primary agents of change. According to Qanay and Frost (2020), teachers' active involvement in reform initiatives ensures alignment between policy goals and classroom realities, increasing the likelihood of sustainable change.

Historically, like many post-Soviet systems, Kazakhstan's education system has been marked by centralised and hierarchical structures. Traditional leadership practices often followed authoritarian models emphasising compliance, control, and limited teacher autonomy (Bush, 2011; Yukl, 2012). Although such models provided uniformity, they frequently resulted in low morale, disengagement, and limited teacher innovation. However, educational reforms are moving toward decentralisation and increased school-level accountability in the current context. This shift underscores the need for leadership approaches that empower teachers and cultivate inclusive, collaborative school environments (Nurmukhanova, 2020).

While teachers are the main agents of change, school leaders play a pivotal role in shaping educational experiences and fostering a positive school environment (Mukhtarova & Medeni, 2013). Moreover, positive relationships between principals and teachers significantly improve principals' satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment. These attitudes influence teachers' perspectives, indicating a mutual impact between the two groups (Price, 2011). Effective school leaders cultivate a positive work environment, which enhances teachers' morale and motivation.

In particular, it is emphasised that teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership styles were significantly linked to different aspects of their work, including teacher motivation (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018), teacher job performance (Saleem et al., 2020), and teacher job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Elmazi, 2018; Hariri et al., 2016; Nazim & Mahmood, 2018; Nguni et al., 2006).

Background to the Study

Kazakhstan, located at the crossroads of Central Asia, has set ambitious national goals through its "Kazakhstan – 2030" and "Kazakhstan – 2050" strategies, aiming to join the ranks of the world's 30 most developed nations and create a welfare society founded on a strong state and broad access to the labour market (Mouraviev, 2020; Utegenova, 2011). One of the primary pillars of these strategies is education, alongside priorities like national security and political stability. In recent years, Kazakhstan has undertaken substantial reforms to modernise its educational system, making it a compelling case for study regarding educational development (Yakavets, 2016a, p. 684).

The success of these reforms, however, depends heavily on the quality and motivation of teachers. Tastanbekova (2018) emphasises that well-qualified educators are essential for successfully implementing these educational changes. However, teacher effectiveness and satisfaction are often linked to the leadership they experience within schools (Yohannes & Wasonga, 2021).

School leadership has emerged as a key determinant of overall school success. Effective principals influence teacher quality, student outcomes, and organisational effectiveness (Sarmurzin et al., 2022). Despite growing international evidence supporting the role of transformational leadership, research on school leadership in Kazakhstan remains underdeveloped. The majority of studies on school leadership in Kazakhstan (Sarmurzin et al., 2022; Yakavets, 2016a) have focused on broader school management

issues. Furthermore, previous research has overlooked teachers' perspectives on how leadership practices affect their satisfaction, motivation, and retention.

Given the critical role of leadership in shaping educational outcomes, understanding the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan is particularly important. Insights into this dynamic can help improve teacher performance and job satisfaction, consequently supporting the main change agents in the educational sphere.

Statement of the Problem

The OECD (2018) reports that 63.4% of teachers in Kazakhstan feel their profession is valued by society, placing the country fifth out of 50 nations participating in the OECD study. While this suggests a high level of respect for teachers in Kazakhstan, there is a notable disconnect between this perception and the realities reported by teachers in international surveys. The president highlighted a pressing issue in Kazakhstan's education system: Despite training over 200,000 people in teaching specialities over the past five years, only 32.2% of graduates have secured employment (Tokayev, 2024). This mismatch points to deeper concerns about teacher retention, job satisfaction, and the country's education quality.

While the Kazakhstani government has taken steps to improve teacher training and increase the number of educators, teacher job satisfaction remains a persistent challenge. The president's 2029 development plan emphasizes professional development pathways and enhanced training programs but does not explicitly address the issue of teacher satisfaction (Tokayev, 2024). In response to ongoing concerns about the professional standing of teachers, the government also enacted the Law on the Status of a Teacher in 2019, which defines the rights, duties, social guarantees, and responsibilities of teachers in Kazakhstan (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Status of a Teacher, 2019). While

this Law represents a significant step in formalizing and protecting the teaching profession, it still leaves room for improvement in addressing the motivational and emotional aspects of the job. Teachers, as the primary agents of change in the educational system, require not only professional growth opportunities but also the support and satisfaction necessary to remain engaged in their roles. This gap in current policies highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to educational leadership that includes targeted strategies for enhancing teacher job satisfaction, an essential element for achieving sustainable education reform in Kazakhstan.

Another challenge lies in the structure of most schools in Kazakhstan, which are comprehensive institutions offering primary, middle, and secondary education under one roof and one principal for all three branches. This setup places significant demands on school leaders, who must navigate the complexities of managing multiple educational stages simultaneously (Mukhtarova & Medeni, 2013). In contrast, many international education systems have specialized schools that cater to distinct educational levels, allowing for more focused leadership. This highlights the need for targeted leadership training in Kazakhstan, particularly in strategies that enhance teacher job satisfaction, an area that remains underdeveloped.

Research by Yakavets (2016b) reveals that although many agree on the need for better leadership training for school principals, most leaders in Kazakhstan are selected through informal processes, often invited to their roles by predecessors. Leadership development typically occurs through on-the-job experience or apprenticeship models rather than through structured, formal training. This lack of systematic professional development leaves many school leaders feeling unsupported and ill-prepared for the demands of their roles (Sarmurzin et al., 2022).

In response to these long-standing concerns, the Kazakhstani government has recently introduced reforms aimed at enhancing educational leadership. In 2023, the Ministry of Education launched the “1,000 Leaders of Change in Education” project to improve school management across the country. As part of this initiative, 207 educators were added to the national talent pool and trained, and 181 of them were appointed to leadership positions in secondary schools without a competitive process (Makulbekov, 2025).

Addressing these gaps requires a broader rethinking of the current approach to leadership development. This includes implementing formal, research-informed training programs that can support aspiring leaders in meeting the complex demands of educational management.

The connection between effective school leadership and teacher job satisfaction is critical. By addressing the deficiencies in principal training and focusing on leadership styles that foster teacher satisfaction, the educational system in Kazakhstan could see significant improvements in teacher retention and student outcomes, making this issue a vital area for research and policy development.

Despite the growing body of international research on the impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Hariri et al., 2016; Nguni et al., 2006), a significant gap exists in studies conducted within the Kazakhstani educational context. While global research has demonstrated the effectiveness of transformational leadership in fostering teacher motivation and commitment (Nazim & Mahmood, 2018), limited empirical research has examined how leadership styles shape teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan’s unique educational system.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a localized analysis of principal leadership styles and their impact on teacher job satisfaction within a Kazakhstani public

school. By incorporating both principal's and teachers' perspectives, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of the leadership-satisfaction dynamic in Kazakhstan's evolving educational landscape. The findings may contribute to policy discussions and practical leadership development programs for school principals in Kazakhstan.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore principal's and teachers' perceptions of the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The main research question is: What are the principals' and teachers' perceptions of the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan?

The subsidiary research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What are the principal's perceptions of her leadership styles?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of principal's leadership styles?
3. What are the principal's perceptions of the relationship between their leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction?
4. What are the teachers' perceptions of the relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction?

By addressing these questions, this research aims to fill the existing knowledge gap and contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of school leadership in enhancing teacher job satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to the growing body of research by examining the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstani schools. While existing studies have extensively explored this link in international

contexts, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on Kazakhstan's unique educational system. Most previous studies, such as Orynbek et al. (2021), have concentrated on higher education, leaving a lack of empirical research at the school level. This study seeks to bridge that gap by providing localized insights into how school leadership influences teacher satisfaction in Kazakhstan.

From a policy perspective, this study's findings can inform school principals' preparation and professional development. Understanding how leadership styles impact teacher job satisfaction can help policymakers design more targeted leadership training programs that foster a supportive and motivating work environment for educators. Given that satisfied teachers are more likely to remain in their profession and demonstrate higher levels of job performance (Bogler, 2001; Hariri et al., 2016), strengthening school leadership practices could directly impact teacher retention and overall school effectiveness in Kazakhstan.

While research on Western educational systems has informed leadership theory and practice, Kazakhstan's distinct socio-cultural and educational context presents unique challenges that require contextualized research-based solutions. According to Yakavets (2016a), exposure to Western educational practices has positively influenced some school leaders, leaving the majority with questions about significant contextual differences that affect how these practices can be implemented in Kazakhstan. Thus, the findings from this study can be integrated into leadership training curricula, ensuring that professional development programs align with the realities of Kazakhstani school settings.

Lastly, from a personal and professional standpoint, this research enhances my expertise as both an educator and researcher. By conducting this study, I gained a deeper understanding of how leadership practices affect teacher motivation and satisfaction. This knowledge will shape my future academic endeavours and influence my teaching practices

and interactions with school leaders. Additionally, the practical recommendations from this research will provide valuable insights for school principals, helping them reflect on and refine their leadership approaches for greater teacher engagement and well-being.

Outline of the Study

The thesis consists of six chapters, beginning with this Introduction Chapter. Chapter 1 establishes the context of the study by providing background information on the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan. It outlines the research problem, purpose, and questions, emphasizing the significance of understanding leadership practices in the context of educational reforms. The chapter also introduces key terms and overviews the study's structure.

Chapter 2 comprehensively reviews the literature related to principal leadership and teacher job satisfaction. It explores key theoretical concepts and defines leadership in the educational context, with a particular focus on transformational and transactional leadership styles. The chapter also examines alternative leadership paradigms, such as authoritarian, distributed, democratic, and ethical leadership, and discusses their relevance to teacher satisfaction. The chapter concludes with the theoretical framework guiding the study, based on Bass' (1985) Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology adopted in this study. It outlines the qualitative case study design, explains the site and sample selection rationale, and details the data collection instruments and procedures. The chapter also discusses the data analysis method, specifically thematic analysis, and addresses ethical considerations related to participant recruitment, consent, confidentiality, and data protection.

Chapter 4 presents the study's findings based on semi-structured interviews with the principal and five teachers. It is organized according to the research questions and

highlights key themes from the data, supported by illustrative excerpts from participants' responses.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the existing literature. It analyzes how the identified leadership styles influenced teacher job satisfaction, identifies patterns and contrasts across participants' experiences, and situates the results within the broader research landscape. The chapter also reflects on the relevance of the findings for school leadership practices in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by revisiting the main research question and summarizing the key findings. It outlines practical implications for educational leadership and policy and provides recommendations for enhancing leadership practices and teacher support. The chapter also discusses the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research.

Summary of the Chapter

The introduction chapter establishes the context of the study by providing background information on the relationship between principal leadership and teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan. It outlines the research problem, highlighting gaps in leadership training and the lack of focus on teacher satisfaction in policy discussions. The chapter presents the research purpose, questions, and significance, emphasizing the need for localized insights into school leadership. An outline of the study is also provided to guide the reader through the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study investigates the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction, which has been extensively researched due to its impact on school climate, teacher retention, and student outcomes (Daily, 2018; Day et al., 2016; Nguni et al., 2006). Leadership is crucial in shaping organisational culture and professional relationships, directly influencing teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.

In Almaty, Kazakhstan, public schools face unique socio-political and educational challenges, particularly amid ongoing reforms aimed at enhancing school management and instruction quality (Nurmukhanova, 2020). These reforms highlight the need to explore leadership styles within the Kazakhstani context and their effects on teacher job satisfaction (Nurmukhanova, 2020). This study aims to contribute to the broader discussion on effective educational leadership by investigating this relationship.

This chapter reviews relevant theoretical and empirical literature on principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction. A wide range of leadership styles is discussed and organised along a continuum from top-down, control-based approaches to more collaborative and empowering models. It also delves into the factors driving teacher job satisfaction and presents the theoretical framework for this study: Bass's (1985) Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory. For clarity and consistency, this study will consistently employ the term "leadership styles" to encompass the behavioural, strategic, and relational dimensions of leadership, aligning with the thesis title.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Teacher job satisfaction is critical to educational systems' overall effectiveness and sustainability. It influences not only teacher retention and performance but also student outcomes and the broader school climate. Understanding job satisfaction's dimensions and

influencing factors is essential for fostering a supportive and high-functioning educational environment.

Job satisfaction is widely recognized as a complex and multifaceted concept. According to Bogler (2001), it is shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are those inherent to the teaching profession, including a sense of purpose, professional autonomy, opportunities for career advancement, and the ability to make a meaningful impact on students' lives. These factors contribute to an educator's internal sense of fulfilment and motivation. Conversely, extrinsic factors pertain to external working conditions such as salary, job security, workload, administrative policies, physical working conditions, and especially leadership support.

Jošanov-Vrgović and Pavlović (2014) offer a more nuanced definition of job satisfaction, describing it as an attitude toward one's job encompassing three interconnected dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive dimension reflects teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their work and professional environment. The affective dimension involves emotional responses, such as enthusiasm, frustration, or fulfilment, while the behavioural dimension relates to how these perceptions and emotions influence teachers' engagement, performance, and intentions to remain in the profession.

Research highlights that various contextual and organizational factors significantly influence teacher job satisfaction. These include the quality of leadership, school culture, collegial relationships, opportunities for professional development, and recognition of teachers' efforts. For example, supportive and participative leadership styles, such as transformational or distributed leadership, have been consistently linked to higher levels of teacher satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Daily, 2018; Hariri et al., 2016; Somech, 2005). In contrast, overly bureaucratic environments, lack of voice in decision-making, or unclear expectations can lead to dissatisfaction and burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Studies in Kazakhstan suggest that teacher job satisfaction is influenced by additional factors, such as administrative burden, limited resources, and the pace of educational reforms (Nurmukhanova, 2020; Ratova et al., 2024; Sarmurzin et al., 2022). Teachers often report that their job satisfaction is closely tied to the level of support they receive from school leadership, their opportunities for career development, and the alignment of school policies with their professional values.

Overall, teacher job satisfaction emerges as a dynamic and multi-layered construct shaped by personal aspirations, interpersonal relationships, and institutional structures. Recognizing and addressing the diverse factors influencing satisfaction is essential for cultivating an engaged and effective teaching workforce.

Principal Leadership Styles

Leadership is broadly defined as a process of social influence to achieve shared goals (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2012). In educational settings, it involves managing school operations, cultivating a positive learning climate, and motivating staff (Nawaz & Khan, 2016; Pardosi & Utari, 2022). Effective leadership is characterised by strategic decision-making, strong interpersonal skills, and inspiration, which directly affects teacher morale and student performance (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020).

In Kazakhstan, the evolution of school leadership reflects a shift from highly centralised, command-based models toward more participatory and reform-oriented approaches (Nurmukhanova, 2020). Understanding this evolution is essential for analysing the interplay between leadership behaviours and teacher job satisfaction. The following sections present a range of leadership styles along a continuum from directive and control-based models to more collaborative and empowering forms, with attention to how each impacts teacher satisfaction.

Authoritarian and Closed Leadership

Authoritarian leadership, also known as autocratic leadership, is characterized by centralized authority, strict control, and minimal participation from subordinates. Leaders who adopt this style make decisions unilaterally and expect unquestioning obedience, suppressing input and autonomy among their followers (Zhang & Xie, 2017).

In the context of education, this leadership style has been particularly associated with post-Soviet systems, where hierarchical structures and limited teacher agency have historically prevailed (Zhang & Xie, 2017). Within this framework, aspects of closed leadership further illustrate the restrictive nature of authoritarian practices. Closed leadership is marked by inflexibility, control-oriented behaviour, secrecy, and unilateral decision-making. This often results in a school climate where collaboration and open communication are limited (Blase & Anderson, 1995, as cited in Shamatov, 2023). Teachers working under such leadership frequently report disengagement, mistrust, and reduced job satisfaction, leading to defensive or passive behaviours in response to their limited autonomy.

The authoritarian approach directly opposes transformational leadership, which actively encourages collaboration, empowers followers, and fosters a shared vision. This style ultimately enhances motivation and job satisfaction (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Although transactional leadership also maintains a hierarchical structure, it differs from authoritarian leadership by relying on a clear system of rewards and punishments. This creates a more defined exchange between leaders and subordinates (Nguni et al., 2006).

Empirical research consistently indicates that authoritarian leadership negatively affects teacher job satisfaction. Studies have shown that while this style may promote uniformity and control, it often leads to diminished morale, reduced autonomy, heightened

stress levels, and overall disengagement among educators (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Nguni et al., 2006).

Task-Oriented Leadership

Task-oriented leadership emphasizes efficiency, structure, and the successful completion of tasks, often prioritizing organizational goals over interpersonal relationships. Although less overtly authoritarian, this style shares an underlying focus on control and order, placing task accomplishment above collaboration and teacher well-being. In educational settings, task-oriented leadership has been found to negatively affect teacher satisfaction, particularly in areas such as communication, collegiality, and overall school climate (Somech, 2005).

Task-oriented leadership also closely parallels transactional leadership, as both rely on structured, performance-based management approaches. While this style can establish clear expectations, roles, and accountability systems, it often lacks the motivational and inspirational elements necessary to foster deep teacher engagement and sustained job satisfaction (Somech, 2005). Yukl (2013) notes that leadership styles that emphasize extrinsic motivation through performance-based rewards and consequences may inadvertently overlook the intrinsic drivers of motivation and the emotional connections that are more effectively cultivated through transformational leadership approaches.

Transactional Leadership

Building on the structured nature of task-oriented leadership, transactional leadership also emphasizes clarity, consistency, and control but places greater focus on the exchange relationship between leaders and followers. Grounded in reinforcement theory, this style relies on contingent rewards, where recognition or compensation is provided for meeting specific performance expectations (McCleskey, 2014). It is often seen as

pragmatic and results-driven, particularly effective in maintaining stability and operational efficiency within structured educational environments (Grint, 2005).

Two key components define transactional leadership: contingent rewards and management by exception. In the case of contingent rewards, leaders set clear performance expectations and provide incentives or rewards when those expectations are met (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Management by exception, whether active or passive, involves either proactively correcting performance deviations or intervening after problems escalate (Bass & Avolio, 1994; McCleskey, 2014).

While transactional leadership can provide procedural clarity and reinforce perceptions of fairness, it often lacks the relational and motivational depth necessary to engage teachers fully. Its emphasis on extrinsic motivation may fail to foster intrinsic commitment and emotional investment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Elmazi, 2018; Nazim & Mahmood, 2018). Although a positive association with job satisfaction has been reported (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), the effect is generally weaker than that observed under transformational leadership.

Furthermore, overreliance on management by exception, particularly when perceived as corrective, can hinder teacher morale and trust, encouraging compliance rather than professional growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Nevertheless, transactional leadership is not inherently harmful. Transactional leadership can contribute to a stable and predictable work environment when balanced with more transformational practices. Clear expectations, consistent evaluation, and fair rewards remain important factors in fostering teacher motivation, especially in contexts where structure and accountability are valued (Dai et al., 2013).

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership represents a shift toward more inclusive and participatory leadership practices, aligning closely with the principles of transformational leadership. Unlike authoritarian or task-oriented models, democratic leadership emphasizes collaboration, open communication, and shared decision-making. Principals who adopt this style actively seek teacher input, respond to their professional needs, and cultivate a school culture grounded in mutual respect and collective responsibility (Ch et al., 2017).

Research indicates that teachers working under democratic leaders often report higher levels of job satisfaction, primarily due to the increased sense of autonomy, empowerment, and opportunities for professional growth (Ch et al., 2017; Daily, 2018). These characteristics strongly mirror the core tenets of transformational leadership, particularly in their focus on building trust, fostering motivation, and prioritizing individual development. Daily (2018) further highlights that democratic leaders tend to be supportive, authentic, and approachable, contributing to a positive and collaborative work environment.

Positioned along the continuum of leadership styles, democratic leadership is a bridge between transactional models focused on structure and accountability and more fully transformational approaches centred on vision, inspiration, and shared purpose. Its emphasis on open communication and shared leadership makes it well-suited to enhancing teacher engagement and satisfaction, especially in contexts that value inclusivity and professional voice.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership, also called collaborative leadership, moves away from traditional hierarchical structures by promoting the shared distribution of leadership responsibilities across multiple organisation members (Spillane, 2005). Unlike

transformational leadership, which often concentrates influence on a central figure, distributed leadership decentralises authority, emphasising collective ownership and shared accountability. It also differs from transactional leadership in prioritising collaboration over structured exchanges.

In educational settings, distributed leadership is characterised by collaborative decision-making, collective responsibility, and reciprocal influence among teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to achieve common goals (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2013). Leadership roles are assigned based on expertise rather than formal titles, fostering a dynamic environment where teamwork and shared purpose drive school improvement.

In practice, this approach empowers teachers to lead initiatives, participate in decision-making, and engage in collaborative problem-solving (Torres, 2018). Principals encouraging distributed leadership foster open communication and create inclusive school cultures rooted in trust and shared values.

Research consistently supports a positive association between distributed leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Studies have shown that morale and professional engagement improve when teachers feel their voices are valued and share leadership responsibilities (Hartley, 2010; Somech, 2005; Torres, 2018).

People-Oriented Leadership

People-oriented leadership emphasises interpersonal relationships, emotional support, and staff well-being. Jošanov-Vrgović and Pavlović (2018) describe this style as focusing on building trust, fostering collegiality, and promoting a positive working climate. Their research suggests that principals who adopt a people-oriented approach contribute significantly to teacher satisfaction, particularly in areas such as teamwork, school development, and supportive professional relationships.

This leadership style shares key features with transformational leadership, particularly its emphasis on individualised consideration, where leaders attend to their teachers' personal and professional needs (Bass, 1990). People-oriented leaders create school environments where teachers feel valued and motivated by prioritising empathy, active listening, and emotional support.

Situated along the continuum of leadership styles, people-oriented leadership moves further away from control-focused models toward more human-centred, relational approaches. It reinforces the growing consensus in educational research that positive interpersonal dynamics between leaders and teachers play a crucial role in fostering job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Transformational and Open Leadership

Transformational leadership is widely recognised as an effective approach in educational contexts because it emphasises inspiring and empowering followers to achieve shared goals rather than relying on transactional exchanges or compliance-based systems (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Unlike transactional leadership, which depends on rewards and performance monitoring, transformational leadership seeks to elevate motivation, commitment, and ethical behaviour through visionary and supportive practices (Bass, 1985). Research indicates that this style has a stronger positive impact on organisational performance and innovation, fostering creativity and proactive engagement among team members (Abbas & Ali, 2021; Jung, 2001).

Building on Bass's (1985) foundational work, Bass and Avolio (1994) refined the model by identifying four core dimensions of this leadership style: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Leaders who demonstrate idealised influence act as role models, earning the trust and admiration of their staff. Inspirational motivation articulates a compelling, optimistic vision that unites

and energises the school community. Through intellectual stimulation, leaders encourage critical thinking, questioning of assumptions, and collaborative problem-solving.

Individualised consideration involves recognising each teacher's personal and professional needs and offering mentorship and support to promote growth and well-being (Bakker et al., 2022; Chebon et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Within this context, open leadership (Blase & Anderson, 1995, as cited in Shamatov, 2023) closely aligns with transformational practices, emphasising honesty, transparency, collegiality, and supportiveness. Open leadership fosters an environment where teachers feel respected, valued, and empowered, reinforcing trust, collaboration, and shared decision-making principles central to transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership practices, such as communicating a shared vision, motivating staff through purposeful dialogue, and prioritising professional development, contribute to stronger school cultures and higher teacher satisfaction (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Jung, 2001). Teachers led by transformational principals consistently report greater motivation, a stronger sense of purpose, and higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Bogler, 2001; Hariri et al., 2016; Nazim & Mahmood, 2018).

These findings are reinforced by meta-analyses showing that transformational leadership correlates more strongly with job satisfaction than transactional leadership. Studies by Judge and Piccolo (2004) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) emphasise its impact on motivation and morale, while more recent work highlights its role in fostering a positive school climate and reducing teacher burnout (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Ethical Leadership

While transformational leadership emphasises vision, empowerment, and professional growth, ethical leadership builds upon these foundations by placing a central

focus on integrity, fairness, and moral responsibility in both leadership practices and organisational culture. It strongly emphasises role-modelling ethical behaviour and fostering a culture of trust and transparency (Brown et al., 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2006). It promotes moral reasoning, inclusivity, and ethical conduct throughout the organisation, shaping both follower behaviour and the broader school climate (Neubert et al., 2009).

While ethical leadership shares some overlap with transformational and transactional approaches, it differs in key ways. Transformational leadership motivates followers through vision and inspiration, and transactional leadership relies on reward-based exchanges (Bass, 1985). Ethical leadership, in contrast, prioritises moral values over performance incentives, emphasising ethical standards, teacher well-being, and organisational justice (Hoch et al., 2016). As Avolio and Gardner (2005) note, not all transformational practices are inherently moral, underscoring the distinct role of ethical leadership.

Research has shown a strong positive relationship between ethical leadership and teacher job satisfaction. Leaders who model fairness and uphold ethical standards create a supportive climate that enhances trust, motivation, and professional engagement (Neubert et al., 2009; Yates, 2011). In doing so, ethical leadership contributes to teacher well-being and improved student outcomes, reinforcing its importance in educational settings.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Bass's (1985) Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory as its central framework for examining the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction. The theory outlines two distinct leadership orientations. Transformational leadership is defined by four core dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Principals who demonstrate these qualities inspire

teachers to transcend personal interests for shared goals by articulating a compelling vision, encouraging innovation, modelling ethical behaviour, and offering personalised support. This leadership style has consistently been associated with higher teacher motivation, professional fulfilment, and job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

In contrast, transactional leadership is based on an exchange relationship between leaders and followers, relying primarily on contingent rewards and management by exception (Bass, 1990). While contingent rewards recognise and reinforce desired performance, management by exception involves corrective interventions when performance deviates from expectations (Bogler, 2001). Although transactional leadership can help maintain order and clarify expectations (Leithwood & Sun, 2012), it often lacks the deeper relational and motivational elements necessary for sustaining long-term teacher engagement and job satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Therefore, this study hypothesises that transformational leadership will be more positively associated with teacher job satisfaction than transactional leadership. This framework was selected because it offers a robust structure for analysing various leadership styles observed in schools. Democratic, distributed, people-oriented, and ethical leadership approaches share key conceptual ground with transformational leadership, emphasising empowerment, collaboration, and professional growth. Conversely, authoritarian and task-oriented leadership styles align more closely with transactional leadership. Bass's theory (1985) thus provides a comprehensive lens for comparing diverse leadership styles and evaluating their impact within the context of ongoing educational reform in Kazakhstan.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has outlined the theoretical foundations and existing research relevant to exploring the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction. It described key factors influencing teacher satisfaction, reviewed principal leadership styles along a continuum from control-based to empowering approaches, and presented Bass's (1985) Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theory as the study's conceptual framework. Relevant literature was used to explain and support the organization of leadership styles and to justify the framework's suitability for addressing the research questions. The next chapter outlines the research design, method, participant and site selection, data collection instrument, and ethical considerations guiding this qualitative case study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter introduces and justifies the research methodology employed in this study to explore principal and teacher perceptions of the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Specifically, the chapter elaborates on the selection of the research design, research method, the study site, and the sample selection. It also provides a detailed description of the data collection instruments, procedures and data analysis. Finally, the chapter discusses the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

Research Design

In order to achieve the study's purpose and explore research questions in detail, this study adopts a qualitative research design, as it seeks to explore complex social phenomena and give voice to participants' experiences. As Creswell (2013) explains, qualitative research is appropriate when "a problem or an issue needs to be explored" and when the researcher aims to "identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices" (p. 77). Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that the primary goal of qualitative research is "to understand how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 15). Rather than predicting outcomes or establishing causal relationships, qualitative research seeks to explore meaning, context, and perspective.

This study's focus on how teachers and the principal perceive the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction aligns well with these aims. A qualitative approach allows for the collection of rich, descriptive data that reflects the participants' voices and experiences, which is central to addressing the research questions.

Research Method

Within the qualitative approach, this study employed a case study design suitable for understanding a specific, bounded system within its real-life context. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define it, a case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 37), where the “bounded system” can be an organization, individual, or event. In this research, the bounded system is a single public school in Almaty, and the unit of analysis includes the school principal and five teachers working under their leadership.

This research is framed as a case study because it focuses on one school setting over a specific period, with clearly defined participants. The school serves as the context in which principal leadership practices are enacted and interpreted by teachers, making it a coherent unit for in-depth analysis. According to Gerring (2004), a case study is “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of units” (p. 342), and the insights gained from this particular school can inform understanding of leadership dynamics in other public schools in Kazakhstan.

Conducting a case study enables the researcher to explore how leadership styles are experienced by individuals in a specific institutional environment, capturing the intricate relationships and contextual factors that influence job satisfaction. This method allows for a comprehensive exploration of the nuances in leadership styles and their direct effects on teacher job satisfaction, capturing the complexity of interpersonal relationships and organizational culture (Elmazi, 2018).

Daily (2018) used a similar case study approach to explore the influence of principal leadership styles on teacher job satisfaction in one school in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia in the US. Informed by this precedent, the current study applies a case study methodology to investigate leadership practices and their perceived impact on

teacher motivation in a Kazakhstani context, aiming to produce rich, holistic insights into the role of leadership in shaping the school environment.

Site Selection

The site selected for this research is a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. This school serves 2,041 students, employs 165 teachers, and has over 200 staff members. It offers instruction in two languages, Kazakh and Russian, and operates in two shifts to accommodate its large student population. These characteristics create a dynamic and complex institutional environment, making the school suitable for exploring how different leadership styles affect teacher job satisfaction.

As one of Kazakhstan's most significant urban centres, Almaty has a culturally diverse educational landscape. This diversity provides valuable opportunities to investigate how various leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction across different cultural and social backgrounds (Orynbek et al., 2021).

Public school principals in Kazakhstan face multiple responsibilities, including implementing national education policies, managing limited resources, and fostering teacher motivation (OECD, 2014). These systemic demands shape their leadership behaviours and impact the overall school culture. The chosen school reflects this complexity, providing a relevant and information-rich environment for case study research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Access to the research site was obtained through direct communication with the school leaders. Four public school principals in Almaty were contacted and informed about the study's purpose, scope, and procedures through official letters to the gatekeeper (see Appendix B). The fourth principal responded positively and granted permission to conduct the research within their institution. The site was selected based on its accessibility,

alignment with the study's objectives, and the willingness of the administration to support the research process.

Sample Selection

This study employed purposive sampling, a widely used technique in qualitative research where participants are intentionally selected based on their ability to provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposive sampling allows researchers to choose participants with direct experience with the phenomena being studied, such as teachers and principals in a specific school setting in Almaty. This ensured that the data collected was highly relevant to the research question (Metaferia et al., 2023).

Specifically, criterion-based purposive sampling was applied. This method involves selecting cases that meet predetermined criteria, ensuring that the sample aligns closely with the research objectives. This approach is commonly used in qualitative research to enhance the relevance and richness of the data collected (Palinkas et al., 2013).

One key criterion was that all teacher participants must have worked with the current principal for at least one academic year, allowing them to develop familiarity with the principal's leadership practices. Additionally, participants were selected to represent a variety of roles and subject areas, including core subjects such as English, Kazakh language and literature, and informatics, as well as varying levels of professional qualification (e.g., teacher, teacher-moderator, teacher-researcher). This diversity helped ensure that multiple perspectives were represented in the analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1

Background of participants

Pseudonym	Subject	Work experience	Category attained
Zhanar (Principal)	Kazakh language and literature	18 years	

Aigerim	Kazakh language and literature	34 years	Teacher-researcher
Gaukhar	English language	8 years	Teacher
Aliya	Informatics	3 years	Teacher-moderator
Samal	English language	3 years	Teacher-moderator
Gulmira	Kazakh language and literature	5 years	Teacher-moderator

Note. Only pseudonyms are used.

The principal was selected based on her substantial leadership experience, which was crucial to the study's purpose. The current principal is a woman in her mid-40s who has served in school leadership for 18 years, with 14 years at the same school. Her extensive experience offers valuable insight into the evolution of leadership practices and their influence on teacher satisfaction within a consistent institutional context. Teacher participants were recruited after the principal approved the study. Recruitment took place informally in communal areas such as the teachers' lounge and coworking spaces to minimize any sense of coercion and promote a comfortable, voluntary environment. Ensuring genuine voluntary participation was a critical ethical consideration. Teachers were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. Initially, 10 teachers expressed interest. After applying the inclusion criteria and considering availability, a final sample included five teachers and one principal. This sample size aligns with the case study methodology, favouring a small, focused group for in-depth exploration (Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling was used to gather rich, detailed data within a manageable scope efficiently (Metaferia et al., 2023).

Data Collection Instrument

This study used semi-structured interviews to collect data to explore the perceptions of teachers and the principal regarding leadership practices and their impact on teacher job satisfaction. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that combines open-ended questions with a degree of flexibility. This approach allows the

researcher to delve into emerging themes while maintaining a general structure (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike structured interviews, which follow rigid, predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews facilitate probing follow-up questions, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences in greater depth (Bryman, 2016).

This methodological choice was especially suitable for the current study, as it allowed participants to share rich, nuanced accounts of their interactions with school leadership, reflecting their individual experiences and perspectives. The interview questions were informed by existing literature on school leadership and teacher job satisfaction and were designed to explore key themes such as goal-setting, communication, fairness, professional support, delegation, and shared decision-making (Cohen et al., 2017).

The interview protocols were structured around the four subsidiary research questions to facilitate focused data collection and thematic clarity. The main research question seeks to understand the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the relationship between leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a broader sense. As an overarching question, it integrates insights from all four sub-questions instead of requiring distinct interview prompts. This approach aligns with qualitative research practices, emphasising inductive synthesis and meaning-making from thematically organised data (Naeem et al., 2023).

Two interview protocols were developed to accommodate the participants' differing roles: one for teachers (see Appendix C) and another for the principal (see Appendix D). Each protocol was divided into three parts: introductory questions to establish rapport, core thematic questions related to leadership and job satisfaction, and open-ended concluding questions to elicit any additional insights participants wished to share. This structure provided comprehensive coverage of the research topics while

allowing for exploring emergent themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). For instance, participants were asked open-ended questions such as, “Can you describe how the principal supports your professional development? Can you provide an example?” This approach encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences, resulting in richer, more detailed responses about leadership practices.

Overall, the semi-structured interview method effectively balanced consistency and openness. The carefully crafted questions facilitated deep, reflective, and experience-based responses, ensuring that the data collected was meaningful and relevant to the study’s aim of understanding the perceived influence of principal leadership styles on teacher job satisfaction.

Procedures

Negotiations with the school and the selection of participants were done following ethics approval from the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee in October 2024. As outlined in the site selection section, the principal was the gatekeeper to facilitate access to the research site. A formal letter outlining the study’s purpose, scope, and ethical procedures was sent to the principal (see Appendix B). The recruitment process began after the principal granted permission to conduct the research at the site.

As discussed in the sampling section, purposive criterion sampling was employed to select participants who could provide in-depth insights into the research topic. The principal was selected based on extensive leadership experience, while teachers were selected based on two criteria: a minimum of one year working alongside the current principal and representation across various subject areas and levels of professional qualification.

Teacher participants were approached through informal conversations in shared spaces such as the staff room and school corridors. This recruitment strategy was

intentionally informal to minimise perceived pressure, particularly within Kazakhstan's hierarchical school culture, where principals play a significant role in teachers' professional development and advancement opportunities (Qanay et al., 2021). Creating an approachable and respectful environment fostered voluntary engagement and built participant trust.

Informed consent letters were prepared in three languages: Kazakh, Russian, and English, and participants were allowed to choose the version in the language they felt most comfortable with. After selecting participants, each teacher received the consent letter accordingly (see Appendix E). The principal also received an informed consent letter (see Appendix F). The consent forms detailed the study's purpose, procedures, participants' rights, and confidentiality measures. During meetings, participants' questions were addressed, and it was reiterated that they could withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer specific questions. Upon agreement to participate, interviews were scheduled at mutually convenient dates and times.

Over five weeks, visits to the school occurred on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM to recruit participants and conduct interviews. A total of six participants, including one principal and five teachers, took part in the study. Each participant was interviewed once, followed by a follow-up interview to clarify and explore emerging themes in greater depth. The interviews were held in private spaces within the school, such as vacant classrooms and a designated coworking area in the library. While participants were offered the option to conduct interviews outside of school, on-site meetings were preferred due to demanding schedules.

Before each interview, participants could review the consent form and ask any questions. After reaffirming their willingness to proceed, the interviews were audio-recorded with their consent for later transcription and analysis. Supplementary notes were

also taken during the interviews to capture key observations, reactions, and potential follow-up points. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts to protect participants' identities and written materials, and no identifying information was shared with the school administration or included in any documentation.

To ensure effective communication and validity, interviews were conducted in the language selected by each participant. Most interviews were conducted in Kazakh, while one participant chose a combination of Kazakh and Russian. Allowing participants to speak their preferred language facilitated more open and natural discussions, which is essential in qualitative interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Scheduling required flexibility due to participants' varying workloads. Some teachers needed to reschedule because of unforeseen circumstances, such as covering for absent colleagues. However, suitable times were arranged through open communication via WhatsApp, ensuring that their professional responsibilities were not disrupted.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved transcribing, reading, and analysing each interview conducted by the researcher. According to Creswell (2013), the key elements of data analysis include coding the data by assigning meanings to fragments of information, merging these codes into broader themes, and presenting the findings through visualisations such as tables or graphs. For this study, thematic analysis was employed.

Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method that focuses on identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within the data (Clarke & Braun, 2016). This method offers flexibility in approaching research patterns through inductive and deductive strategies (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). In this study, an inductive approach was used, which allows the data to shape the emerging themes, unlike the

deductive approach, which requires the researcher to apply predetermined themes based on theoretical frameworks or prior knowledge.

Thematic analysis also requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the data to identify recurring themes that address the research questions (Peterson, 2017). The analysis process followed the six-step framework outlined by Kiger and Varpio (2020), which includes: i) familiarisation with the data; ii) coding; iii) searching for themes; iv) reviewing themes; v) defining themes; and vi) writing up the findings.

Google Sheets and Microsoft Word were used to systematically categorise themes and subthemes, as well as manual coding and data organisation (See Appendix G for an example of an interview transcript and coding process). These tools enabled the researcher to track and systematically organise the data, clearly identifying key themes and categories.

Ethical Considerations

This study maintained rigorous ethical standards to protect all participants' dignity, privacy, and well-being. Before data collection began, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) web-based training program (<https://about.citiprogram.org>), obtaining certification for conducting ethical research. Following this, I submitted an ethics application to the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee. This application detailed the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality measures. After receiving approval in October 2024, the data collection process commenced.

To ensure participants could make informed and voluntary decisions about their involvement, I explained the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical safeguards during recruitment. Teachers were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences or to skip any questions

they found uncomfortable. These points were emphasized during recruitment and reiterated before each interview to ensure complete transparency, respecting autonomy (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019) and adhering to ethical research principles. Each participant received an informed consent form in Kazakh, Russian, or English, allowing them to choose their preferred language (see Appendix E for teachers; Appendix F for the principal). The form outlined participants' rights, including the ability to ask questions, withdraw from the study, and seek clarification on any aspect of the research. Participants were asked to read and sign the consent form, and each was provided a copy for their records.

To protect participant anonymity, the school's name was intentionally excluded from all research documentation. Personal identifiers were not recorded in any transcripts, reports, or publications. Instead, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and used consistently throughout the study. These privacy measures were communicated during recruitment and reiterated prior to each interview. Additionally, confidentiality was maintained through secure data storage. All digital files, including audio recordings, transcriptions, and participant information, were stored in password-protected folders on my personal computer. These files will be retained for three years and permanently deleted following the university's ethical research practices.

Although the study posed minimal physical or psychological risk, several potential concerns were anticipated. Given the hierarchical nature of Kazakhstani schools, there was a risk that the principal could identify participants and take issue with their responses, potentially causing workplace discomfort. To mitigate this, strict confidentiality protocols were followed, and participants were reassured that their identities would not be disclosed to the school administration. Furthermore, discussing sensitive aspects of leadership experiences could cause mild emotional discomfort for some participants. To address this,

participants were reminded to skip any question and pause or terminate the interview at any time, acknowledging the potential for power dynamics and emotional risks (Flick, 2018).

Another minor challenge involved scheduling. Teachers often faced time constraints due to professional obligations and occasional last-minute substitutions. To minimize disruption, interviews were scheduled flexibly and adjusted as needed to accommodate participants' availability. Despite these minor challenges, the study also offered clear benefits to participants. The interview process gave teachers a reflective space to explore and articulate their professional experiences and perspectives on school leadership (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Many participants appreciated the opportunity to share their thoughts, noting that such reflective conversations are rarely part of their routine. In recognition of their time and contributions, all participants received small tokens of appreciation after completing their interviews (Liamputtong, 2007).

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlined the qualitative case study methodology used to explore the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. It described the research design, method, site and sample selection, data collection instruments, procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Every methodological choice was supported by relevant literature to justify its suitability for addressing the research questions and ensuring the study's rigour. The next chapter presents the study's findings, highlighting the key themes from the interviews with the principal and teachers.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of my study on the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction at a public school in Almaty. I employed a qualitative case study approach, collecting data through semi-structured interviews with five teachers and one principal. The primary criterion for selecting participants was that they had a minimum tenure of one year working with the principal. Each interview was transcribed and analyzed manually using codes, which allowed me to organize and systematize recurring themes. This process provided valuable insights from both the principal's and the teachers' perspectives.

The chapter is organized into four key sections that correspond to the research questions: i) the principal's perceptions of their leadership style; ii) teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership; iii) the principal's views on how leadership style influences teacher job satisfaction; and iv) teachers' perspectives on how leadership style affects their job satisfaction. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings, setting the stage for the discussion in the following chapter.

The Principal's Perceptions of Her Leadership Styles

In this section, the principal's perceptions of her leadership styles are explored, explicitly addressing Research Question 1: What are the principal's perceptions of her leadership styles? The insights gathered provide a detailed understanding of how she perceives her leadership style, reflecting her approach and its impact on the school environment. In particular, we will explore how her style fosters staff motivation, her commitment to continuous development, the importance of leading by example, the role of fairness, and how feedback from new teachers contributes to shaping the school environment.

Setting School Direction and Goal Setting

Effective leadership is essential in education, especially when setting a clear direction and establishing meaningful goals for a school. My interviews with Zhanar, a principal with 18 years of experience, 14 of which she has dedicated to her current school, revealed her thoughtful approach to navigating these challenges. She truly believes that effective leaders are not only visionaries but also active researchers and collaborators.

Zhanar often emphasises the importance of ongoing analysis in her role. Even after nearly two decades in education, she insists that her primary responsibility is systematic analysis—a process she defines as a continuous cycle of planning, organising, implementing, and evaluating. As she puts it, “A leader’s primary duty is to analyse the institution they step into, regardless of the school. I have been at this school for 14 years, yet I still conduct analyses. Every year, I evaluate various aspects of the school.” This commitment to regular reflection allows her to remain responsive to the school’s needs, ensuring that her vision evolves along with them.

The principal has highlighted three key factors driving her school’s growth: research, English language proficiency, and leadership development. She has a deep passion for research, describing it as an endless ocean of knowledge: “Science never fades. You can keep exploring forever because research is like diving into a vast, bottomless sea.” This strong emphasis on research has contributed to the school’s success, helping it earn top academic rankings and several awards.

In addition to her research responsibilities, Zhanar is deeply committed to advancing English language proficiency, particularly in STEM education. She explained that the school had initially prioritised English-medium instruction as part of its long-term vision. However, this direction has become even more relevant due to the current demand for STEM specialists who are proficient in English. According to Zhanar, teaching STEM

subjects in English opens up more academic and professional opportunities for students and equips them to engage with global knowledge and innovation. To support this goal, the school has implemented a program that trains STEM teachers to deliver their lessons in English. Zhanar views this initiative as a strategic response to national education priorities and the increasing importance of English in international STEM fields.

Zhanar's vision for leadership development extends beyond faculty; she believes in the potential of each student to grow into a strong leader. She passionately states, "In 11 years, a student should step onto a big stage at least 11 times; that's how they open up." She is aware of the risks posed by a system that may suppress student voice, warning that allowing students to go through school without meaningful opportunities to speak and present feels like a significant injustice:

If, for 11 years, they just go from one class to another, sitting through six lessons a day without speaking, and continue this silence year after year, there are students who graduate after 11 years without ever expressing themselves. That, to me, feels like a great injustice to the child, who we failed to uncover their potential. Every student should leave school prepared for life, fully developed and confident in their abilities.

In summary, Zhanar's approach to setting direction and goals demonstrates her commitment to not just academic success but the holistic development of every student. By prioritising systematic analysis, embracing collaborative planning, and focusing on research, English proficiency, and leadership, she charts a path toward excellence that truly prepares students for the future.

Distributed Leadership

Building on Zhanar's commitment to promoting excellence in academics and student development, the concept of distributed leadership emerges as a vital component of

her approach. This method enhances collaboration, which is essential for achieving shared goals and supporting every student's growth.

In the broader context of Kazakhstani public schools, the leadership structure typically includes a principal supported by several vice-principals (also referred to as deputy directors). This model is regulated by national policy; the number of vice-principals assigned to a school depends on its size and specific needs, as outlined in the Social Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023). Each vice-principal is generally responsible for a particular area of school management. For example, the Vice-Principal for Academic Affairs oversees curriculum implementation and student academic progress; the Vice-Principal for Educational Work manages extracurricular activities and student discipline; and the Vice-Principal for Administrative Affairs handles logistical support such as facilities and resources. This formal division of responsibilities provides a comprehensive framework for school governance. In the next section, I will explore how this structure is implemented within the specific schools involved in this study.

Zhanar clearly defines the roles of her three vice-principals, assigning responsibilities related to educational work, research development, and academic affairs. Emphasising the importance of delegation, she states, "The principal does not work alone—there are deputy directors and an administrative team." This perspective highlights her understanding that effective leadership is rooted in distributed leadership. She further elaborates on her approach: "The key responsibility is organisation: delegating tasks, overseeing the process, and monitoring how each person performs their work."

Through this ongoing delegation cycle, Zhanar establishes a feedback loop, allowing data collection to inform continuous improvements. This iterative process enables her to ensure that school initiatives remain responsive and effective in meeting the community's needs.

Adopting a distributed leadership model empowers her vice-principals and fosters an environment where shared decision-making can thrive. Zhanar emphasises that decision-making within her school extends beyond the deputy directors; it involves a broader team. “In our school, decisions are not made solely by the deputy directors. We have a *Damu* (which translates from Kazakh as ‘development’) team, currently consisting of 56 members.” This team includes teachers who demonstrate leadership potential and those who voluntarily express interest in contributing.

Interestingly, the coordinator of this team is currently a geography teacher, reflecting Zhanar’s belief that leadership roles are not restricted to administrative positions. She underscores the importance of collective input in decision-making: “Of course, as the leader, I have a clear vision of where we are heading and where we will be in five or seven years. However, how we reach that vision is something we discuss and decide together as a team.”

This shared leadership model actively involves teachers in shaping school policies and strategic planning, fostering a sense of ownership and motivation among the staff. By including teachers in decision-making, Zhanar ensures that leadership is shared rather than top-down, enhancing teacher satisfaction and engagement in school initiatives.

Overall, Zhanar’s distributed leadership and delegation approach emphasises shared responsibility within the school. By clearly delineating the roles of her vice-principals and promoting shared leadership, she creates an effective leadership structure that supports student growth and academic excellence. The involvement of a broader team, including the *Damu* team, highlights her commitment to inclusive decision-making, ensuring a variety of perspectives contribute to the school’s vision and initiatives.

Leading by Example

The next significant pillar of the principal's leadership is leading by example. Principal Zhanar embodies this philosophy daily: "I always set expectations for myself first." By holding herself accountable to high standards, she establishes a clear benchmark for her staff to aspire to. Her commitment to punctuality, thorough lesson preparation, professional attire, and treating each student with care and attention exemplifies the values she expects from her teachers.

This approach particularly impacts novice teachers who are navigating their new roles. Zhanar notes, "Young teachers who join the school naturally look up to and align themselves with their more experienced colleagues. Whether it is the principal, senior teachers, or other leaders, we tend to model ourselves after those ahead of us." This phenomenon highlights how her actions influence those around her, fostering an environment where professionalism is encouraged and practised daily.

Zhanar also emphasises the importance of the surrounding environment in shaping teachers' behaviours. She states, "The environment shapes individuals, so it is important to create a positive and supportive professional culture." Her dedication to cultivating such an atmosphere motivates all teachers, especially newcomers, to learn and grow within their profession. She recognises how the surrounding environment influences teachers' behaviours and underscores the need for a positive and supportive professional culture.

Continuous Development

Zhanar has an impressive list of personal and professional achievements, including publishing a book about her journey as a principal, securing multiple government grants for future renovations, and leading her school to success in several local and regional competitions. When discussing the key to these accomplishments, she emphasises the importance of continuous development in her leadership philosophy.

Zhanar states, “Growth is continuous progress. The moment you think, ‘I have achieved everything; I have reached my peak,’ your development stops. A person must always keep evolving. Even after 18 years as a principal, I have never thought, ‘I know it all. Now I can relax.’ Instead, I see each achievement as a step toward the next peak.”

This mindset guides her development and sets a standard for her staff, promoting a culture of continuous improvement. The school’s visible transformation, now characterised by high enrollment and demand, demonstrates the effectiveness of her approach.

Initially, the school faced challenges with students from the local area choosing other institutions. However, under Zhanar’s leadership, she has repositioned it as a leading choice within the community. She shares her strategy: “If there is a stronger school ahead of you, study it, learn from it, and strive to surpass it. You should aim to improve day by day.”

Her strategic approach includes learning from successful models in other schools and encouraging her staff to analyse and aspire to those higher standards. Zhanar believes that consistently striving for improvement is essential to achieving long-term success.

Principles of Fairness and Integrity

One aspect of the principal’s leadership style is her commitment to fairness. This principle is fundamental in motivating her staff. Zhanar believes that “where there is fairness, motivation naturally follows.” This conviction was evident when she took a bold stand against a former vice-principal involved in corrupt practices during student presidential elections. Upon discovering that a candidate had improperly influenced one of the vice-principals judging the competition by offering gifts, Zhanar acted decisively and dismissed that individual. Her reasoning was clear: “There is no place in schools for teachers who instil such values in children from an early age. No matter how well-

educated or brilliant their ideas may be, we had to let that teacher go because such educators harm both children and society.”

By holding all educators, whether teachers or vice-principals, to the same ethical standards, she fosters a culture of integrity within the school. In her view, this strong commitment to fairness motivates her team and creates a safe and supportive environment for student learning. These perspectives will also be further explored and discussed from the teachers’ viewpoints.

Zhanar also emphasises fairness when selecting competitions for the school, consciously avoiding any certifications or events known for unjust practices. She firmly states that she “completely rejects those driven by favouritism and connections,” insisting on participation only when genuine fairness is assured. However, she believes it is essential to investigate whether fairness exists, as silence will not bring about change. Therefore, there must always be a counterforce to any form of power.

Listening to Feedback from New Teachers

When examining Principal Zhanar’s style, an interesting leadership practice emerged. This approach not only highlights her methods but also hints at the perspectives of her teachers regarding their reasons for staying in the profession.

Zhanar emphasises her teachers’ views, especially those new to the field and the school environment. She employs a thoughtful strategy by inviting newcomers to share their insights about their experiences during their first year. In discussions with them, she asks three key questions: about their “wow moments,” the challenges they have encountered, and the benefits they have brought to the school. As she puts it, “I do not just get self-reflection; I also receive an evaluation of the school from their perspective.” This method provides Zhanar with valuable feedback on the school’s strengths and weaknesses and helps her assess whether these new teachers will thrive in her school.

What stands out about Zhanar's practice of soliciting feedback is the strong sense of unity among the teaching staff, a sentiment that all new teachers express without hesitation. Zhanar noted, "Everyone has unanimously said that the team is very united," highlighting the collaborative spirit she has fostered within the school. This support is further reinforced by the vice-principals, who play a crucial role in helping new teachers adjust to their roles. She states, "Any of my vice-principals are ready to help and teach. I truly appreciate these qualities and expect the same from myself. I believe in teaching those who do not know and offering support when needed."

Zhanar's leadership approach highlights her openness to feedback and active engagement with her staff. By valuing their input and promoting collaboration, she creates a nurturing and motivating environment that supports new teachers and enhances the educational community.

Communication with Staff and Students

Effective communication is one of the cornerstones of leadership in any educational setting. As Zhanar, the principal, articulates, "People are all different. I have 165 teachers and about 200 staff members." This diversity requires a tailored approach to building relationships. Zhanar emphasises the importance of understanding her colleagues' unique perspectives and needs, asserting, "As a leader, I need to build relationships in a way that ensures these 200 employees meet the expectations and requirements set for them."

Zhanar believes that establishing a strong rapport with her staff is essential not only for maintaining discipline but also for fostering an environment conducive to education. She recognises the irreplaceable role of teachers in the school, stating, "A great teacher is the heart of a school. I cannot personally step in and teach instead of 165 teachers." Her respect for their dedication underscores her commitment to supporting them in their roles.

Each day, these teachers “guide, nurture, and prepare at least 2,700 students for the real world,” which necessitates open and supportive lines of communication.

In addition to fostering connections with her staff, Zhanar strongly emphasises the character development of her students. Through her direct interactions, she promotes the value of discipline and respect. “You may have noticed that discipline is everywhere,” she remarks, reinforcing that high standards apply not just to students but to everyone in the school environment, including herself and the parents.

Zhanar also advocates for acknowledging the contributions of all staff members, regardless of their role. She shares her practice of appreciating the janitor’s efforts, saying, “When I pass by a cleaning lady or a janitor, I say, ‘Thank you, Aunty,’ because without them, the school would not be clean.” She encourages her students to adopt this attitude of gratitude, teaching them that “acknowledging and appreciating their hard work” is as vital a lesson as any academic principle.

By maintaining a culture of respect and discipline, Zhanar aims to create an environment where staff and students can thrive. She recognises the potential for societal values to shift, noting, “Today, material wealth often takes precedence,” and actively works against this trend. Her approach emphasises that respect for all individuals, whether they arrive in luxury cars or perform manual labour, is fundamental to the character she aims to nurture in her students.

The Teachers’ Perceptions of Principal Leadership Styles

This section presents findings related to Research Question 2: What are the teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership styles? Drawing on interview data from five teachers, the section explores how the principal’s leadership is perceived by those working under her direction. The analysis highlights key themes such as her emphasis on high expectations and accountability, her structured and organised approach, and her support for

teacher development. Teachers offered both affirmations and critiques of her leadership, providing a multifaceted view of how leadership is experienced in practice.

Teachers' Perceptions of Decision-Making and School Goals

One of this study's most significant findings concerns the school's decision-making process and how teachers perceive the institution's current goals. While the principal and leadership team strive to involve all teachers in decision-making, participation remains voluntary, and engagement levels vary among staff members.

According to the teachers interviewed, Principal Zhanar and the leadership team actively encourage open dialogue and inclusivity in decision-making. However, not all teachers participate; some are fully engaged, while others prefer to focus solely on their classroom responsibilities. Gaukhar, a language teacher with eight years of experience (see Table 1 in Chapter 3), notes that about half of the staff engage in decision-making, understanding it as an opportunity for professional growth and collaborative learning. She states, "It is important for teachers to voice their thoughts, as this is also a form of self-study. Sharing and exchanging experiences benefits both the teachers and the school." Gaukhar also acknowledges that some colleagues choose to remain disengaged, indicating that participation depends on individual motivation and interest.

Aigerim, a teacher with 34 years of experience in language and literature, echoes this varying level of engagement. She emphasises that not all teachers feel the need to be directly involved in leadership discussions. Some prefer to remain on the sidelines, while others actively voice their opinions or support colleagues who take the initiative. "I don't expect everyone to be 100% enthusiastic and agree with everything. There will always be those who remain passive and those who openly disagree," she explains. Rather than universal enthusiasm, she describes a spectrum of involvement where some teachers passively agree with proposed initiatives while others openly challenge decisions.

Similarly, Samal, a language teacher with three years of experience, acknowledges that although not every teacher is directly involved in goal-setting, key stakeholders, including administrators and experienced educators, ensure that crucial discussions remain open to all. Gulmira, a language teacher with five years of experience, reinforces this point, stating, “Every teacher is on an equal level. This means that everyone has the full right to contribute to decision-making, and every opinion is valued.” She explains that open forums, internal chat discussions, and voting mechanisms guarantee that teachers’ perspectives are considered. However, participation remains voluntary, meaning that only those who express interest actively engage in shaping school policies.

In addition to voluntary participation in decision-making, teachers have shared their views on the Damu team, a structured initiative aimed at driving school improvements. A group member describes how meetings with vice-principals lay the groundwork for broader collaboration. “We have a dedicated chat group for the school’s most active teachers, who are responsible for organising and communicating key initiatives,” they explain. This structured approach ensures that decision-making is not confined to a select few but rather extends to all subject teachers, allowing them to contribute within their respective fields.

The respondent also highlights the Damu team’s impact on fostering innovation. For instance, a recent initiative led to the creation of a digital platform for managing student academic records. This streamlining of data collection allowed homeroom teachers to input and organise student information efficiently. “When one teacher sets an example, it motivates others, allowing us to complete tasks quickly and effectively,” the respondent adds. The leadership team actively encourages teachers to contribute with new ideas, ensuring that innovation remains an open and dynamic process.

It is noteworthy that all teachers are aware of the school's goals and objectives. Gulmira points to implementing a dual diploma program as a significant achievement that aligns with the school's strategic direction. She explains, "Right now, students are actively studying under the Swiss program, and upon graduation, they receive an official diploma. This qualification provides them with advantages when applying to universities abroad." According to her, this initiative reflects the school's broader vision of achieving global recognition, with Zhanar playing a central role in advancing these efforts.

Samal highlights additional goals related to infrastructure and educational resources. She notes that the school aims to improve classroom facilities by equipping each room with modern technology, including interactive whiteboards and updated computing resources. A major priority is the transition toward becoming a fully English-medium school, supported by specialised English training for chemistry, physics, and biology subject teachers. "Currently, our primary goal is to transition into a fully English-medium school, where all subjects are taught in English," she states. She also emphasises the school's ongoing efforts to strengthen its partnership with Swiss institutions, ensuring more students benefit from international opportunities. While acknowledging that these goals have not been fully realised, she observes tangible progress, stating, "We are moving in that direction, and the impact can already be felt."

These insights illustrate that while teachers' engagement in decision-making varies, there is a shared recognition of the school's developmental goals and progress. The leadership's approach to inclusivity, transparency, and strategic planning has fostered an environment where teachers feel they can contribute meaningfully through formal decision-making processes or by supporting their colleagues and students in achieving the school's vision.

Demanding and Goal-Oriented Leadership

The next theme that emerged from the data was the teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership style, which was characterised as both demanding and goal-oriented. Many teachers described the principal as someone who sets high expectations and is deeply committed to fostering a culture of accountability and excellence.

Some educators view this demanding leadership style as a form of positive reinforcement that is essential for their professional development and the needs of the school. For instance, Aliya shared her perspective: "She (the principal) is strict but fair. Without high standards, the school would likely struggle to remain strong and organised. Her demanding approach is what keeps everything running effectively." This reflects the belief that such a leadership style is vital for effective leadership. Aliya further elaborated on this theme by discussing how the principal's structured approach enhances teaching methods: "Because the principal is demanding," she reflected, "we create daily lesson plans, employ various resources for teaching, and are inspired to make our lessons more engaging by incorporating our students' ideas." According to her, the principal's insistence on high standards encourages a shift away from traditional teaching methods dominated by textbooks, signalling a refreshing approach prioritising student engagement and creativity.

Gulmira echoed this view, endorsing the idea of demanding leadership. She illustrated her viewpoint with a saying: "The front cart sets the path, and the ones behind follow," emphasising that the school leader establishes the tone for the entire institution. She believes that genuine success cannot be achieved if a school leader lacks vision and motivation. Without a clear plan or direction, teachers would struggle, and students would merely acquire knowledge without fully developing their creativity or participating in various activities. Thus, strong leadership is essential for fostering innovation and meaningful progress.

In addition to being demanding, one participant also noted that the principal highly supports teachers. Aigerim's comment exemplifies this: "Any project or task we undertake becomes easier for us. The principal provides clear and detailed guidance, almost spoon-feeding us the necessary steps, before allowing us to take the initiative and carry it forward independently." She also pointed out that the principal "does not impose unnecessary difficulties and considers our individual capacities" when assigning responsibilities.

However, navigating the principal's high expectations can be a double-edged sword, and this aspect was viewed from different perspectives. Gaukhar articulated this vividly, describing the principal's leadership style as "precise and demanding a 100%". She elaborated on how the principal sets clear goals for the school, indicating that once an objective is identified, she expects results from her team. For example, if weekly goals are established, all outcomes are assessed by the end of that week. Gaukhar remarked that this emphasis not only focuses on high achievement but also requires that every staff member actively participates in the school's endeavours. While she acknowledges the importance of these expectations, she cautioned, "Because our principal is very demanding, if something doesn't meet expectations, she may even dismiss a teacher in the middle of the school year. There have been cases where this has happened."

Samal highlighted the pressure accompanying such a demanding leadership style, explaining that the principal's rigorous expectations often come with frequent inquiries. She remarked, "She requires us to provide updates, frequently asking how often we organise events, where we have taken our classes, what work we have accomplished, whether students' performance in our subject has improved, and what seminars or competitions we teachers have attended." While these questions aim to foster growth and improvement, they can increase the workload and stress for teachers. Samal acknowledges the leader's intentions to help but feels the pressure can be overwhelming.

Overall, teachers perceive the principal's leadership style as demanding and supportive. Many appreciate the high expectations that foster accountability and professional growth, citing improvements in teaching methods and student engagement, while concerns about the associated pressure are also evident. Educators like Gaukhar and Samal express that the relentless demands can lead to stress, as the principal's expectations require constant performance evaluation.

Support for New Ideas and Innovation

In fostering a culture of innovation, teachers widely recognise the principal's supportive role in introducing new ideas aimed at improving the school. They emphasise that she carefully evaluates proposals before approving them. Aigerim noted that while the principal encourages innovative efforts, she underscores the need for reflection on aspects that may require further consideration. This often involves discussions with the deputy directors before any proposals are finalised.

Samal added that the principal actively solicits new ideas from teachers, creating an environment where innovation is expected. Gulmira explained that the principal supports all projects while seeking to understand their potential outcomes before committing resources. According to the teacher, "For her, there is no such thing as 'no' — everything should be explored, tested, and experimented with." This approach highlights exploration and experimentation as cornerstones of her leadership style.

Teachers also noted that students are encouraged to propose their initiatives. They mentioned that students can create clubs by presenting structured plans to the administration. A recent example involved a request from students to open a Rubik's Cube club, which was approved after careful consideration. The existence of a student government that collaborates with the school administration further enhances the culture of participatory leadership.

These findings suggest that while both teachers and students are encouraged to introduce new initiatives, the principal maintains high standards in evaluating and implementing these ideas to ensure their effectiveness. Many teachers view her as an innovative leader, with Aigerim even referring to her as “a herald of innovation,” highlighting her proactive support for new ideas.

A notable instance of her commitment to professional growth includes participating in a development program abroad. She returned with valuable insights on various educational practices and cultural attitudes towards learning, which she shared with teachers, students, and parents in separate meetings.

Furthermore, the school’s digitalisation efforts show the principal’s drive for innovation. One teacher mentioned that many administrative tasks have been streamlined, leading to improved efficiency. The recent implementation of a system for storing students’ personal information and digitally tracking academic progress allows the principal and teaching staff to access crucial data easily. This change has not only made attendance tracking processes more efficient but has also reduced bureaucratic burdens for teachers.

Overall, the findings indicate that the principal fosters a culture of innovation by encouraging proposals from teachers and students while upholding high standards for their implementation. Her proactive approach, openness to experimentation, and commitment to sharing insights from her professional development experiences further solidify her role as an innovative leader. Additionally, the school’s digitalisation initiatives demonstrate her dedication to efficiency and modernisation, benefiting both staff and students.

Principal as a Motivator

Another key theme from the findings was the principal’s role as a motivator. She embodies this multidimensional role by combining professional support, recognition,

personal inspiration, and an inclusive leadership style. Insights gathered from the teachers reveal a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, illustrating how the principal tailors her strategies to meet the varying needs of her faculty.

Many teachers identify motivation as Zhanar's top leadership quality and dynamic leadership style. Aigerim, a veteran teacher, often observes the principal's exceptional energy, saying, "Sometimes I feel exhausted, but she always comes up with something new every day. She meets with everyone: parents, students, teachers, and even people outside the school." This unwavering dedication resonates with the team, encouraging them to reflect on her commitment to their teaching practices.

Young educator Samal echoed Aigerim's sentiments, appreciating the principal's ability to manage numerous responsibilities while remaining engaged in professional development. This respect is shared among younger teachers, who see Zhanar as a role model. One participant noted, "We have many young teachers compared to older ones. Seeing how our principal leads by example encourages us to follow in her footsteps." This alignment fosters a nurturing environment for mentorship and growth.

The principal also nurtures intrinsic motivation by instilling trust in her experienced teachers. Aigerim pointed out that the principal reassures them of their capabilities, reinforcing their confidence and sense of responsibility.

In addition to intrinsic motivation, tangible incentives play a crucial role. Several teachers highlighted the importance of salary bonuses, which validate their hard work and contribute to job satisfaction. These bonuses are a significant motivating factor, emphasising the value of their efforts.

Formal recognition is another powerful extrinsic motivator. Gaukhar and Aliya noted how certificates of appreciation awarded by Zhanar reinforce their sense of accomplishment. These accolades ensure their contributions are acknowledged, while

verbal recognition during team meetings enhances their standing among colleagues. Aliya mentioned that this fosters a supportive and positive work culture.

The principal also ensures that teachers access essential resources, further supporting their professional growth. Gaukhar mentioned that the school offers a range of professional development programs tailored to various levels of engagement and career progress. This holistic approach integrates intrinsic and extrinsic elements, allowing the principal to nurture a thriving educational environment.

A notable aspect of the principal's leadership is her ability to personalise motivation based on experience levels. She builds trust with seasoned educators, fostering a sense of autonomy while also creating a supportive environment for new teachers. This inclusivity makes all teachers feel valued, regardless of their background.

Gulmira shared a personal experience when she received a certificate of appreciation from the city's Department of Education alongside her more experienced colleagues. This moment, facilitated by Zhanar, instilled a sense of validation and made her feel respected among her peers.

In summary, the principal's approach to motivating her staff integrates various strategies that resonate with teachers. By combining personal motivation, professional recognition, and tailored support, she cultivates an environment in which teachers feel valued and empowered, ultimately contributing to the success of the educational community.

Principal's Communication with Teachers

The principal primarily communicates with teachers through scheduled meetings, supplemented by informal interactions to address issues and coordinate school activities. Although daily direct contact with the principal is infrequent, weekly team meetings provide an essential space for discussion and collaboration.

Teachers describe their relationship with the principal as both professional and collegial. Aigerim summarises, “My relationship with the principal is strictly professional.” She notes that most interactions focus on work-related matters, such as managing student issues and attending school events. However, there is also a sense of equality within the school community. As Aliya states, “Even though she is the school director, we are all colleagues. No one is above anyone else, and everyone is valued equally.” This mindset reinforces teamwork and mutual respect over hierarchy.

Weekly meetings are critical for addressing challenges and planning school activities. Gaukhar emphasises their importance, especially during challenging times, because they allow teachers and the principal to work together on urgent issues. Aliya describes these meetings as chances for reflection and collective problem-solving: “We review mistakes and find solutions together, ensuring we consider different perspectives.” This collaborative approach fosters a supportive and constructive school environment.

Beyond problem-solving, these meetings encourage teacher participation. One teacher notes that they feel more like training sessions than traditional briefings, which creates a more interactive and engaging atmosphere. This setup allows teachers to share their thoughts and experiences, making discussions more meaningful.

Although the principal does not meet with teachers daily, she maintains an open-door policy for addressing concerns. Samal explains, “The principal expects issues to be handled at the appropriate level first.” This means that teachers should attempt to resolve problems independently before escalating them to the vice-principals. If the vice-principals cannot find a solution, the issue is brought to the principal. “No problem should be left unresolved—every issue must have a solution,” she adds. This structured approach ensures that concerns are addressed effectively and that teachers feel supported.

In conclusion, strong communication between the principal and teachers is essential for fostering a supportive and cooperative school culture. Through structured meetings and an open-door policy, the principal encourages engagement, problem-solving, and a shared sense of responsibility among staff.

The Principal's Perceptions of Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

This section presents findings related to Research Question 3: What are the principal's perceptions of the relationship between her leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction? Based on the principal's reflections, explore how she understands how her leadership practices influence teachers' motivation, well-being, and professional fulfilment. The analysis focuses on her emphasis on fairness, emotional support, innovation, and intrinsic motivation as key elements contributing to teacher satisfaction. The principal's narrative illustrates a leadership approach that combines high expectations with empathy, structured management with respect for individuality, and accountability with trust.

Core Ethical Values

The principal emphasised that the foundation of teacher job satisfaction lies in core ethical values such as honesty, openness, and fairness. Zhanar repeated, "Where there is fairness, work will always happen," suggesting that trust and a sense of justice are essential for sustaining teacher motivation. From her perspective, when teachers feel respected and are treated fairly, they are more engaged, willing to contribute ideas, and less likely to feel disillusioned by routine.

Importance of Innovation

Zhanar also highlighted the significance of innovation and creativity in school leadership. She likened the work environment to daily meals, explaining, "Even if the food is delicious, eating the same thing every day will eventually become boring." This

metaphor underscores her belief that leadership should continually stimulate teachers with new projects and ideas to prevent burnout. The emphasis on creativity extends to Zhanar's broader educational philosophy, where a love for the profession and a drive to create is seen as vital for both teacher satisfaction and student engagement.

Recognition and Acknowledgement

According to her, dissatisfaction arises when teachers feel unheard and unrecognised, or their efforts go unnoticed. She stressed that acknowledgement could take many forms, including a private compliment or a simple "well done" during a conversation. These small gestures of appreciation were described as powerful motivators. The principal noted that while she is a demanding and sometimes strict leader, she strives to separate professional feedback from personal criticism: "We can scold someone for their professional actions, but we must never attack their personality." Zhanar emphasised the importance of preserving the dignity of every staff member and maintaining that respect is non-negotiable in any professional relationship.

Balancing Expectations with Support

Balancing high expectations with emotional support was described as an act of basic human decency. "I treat everyone as a person. It's just about being human," the principal explained. She acknowledged that while she holds staff accountable, such as publicly addressing tardiness at a morning meeting, she also offers kindness and warmth once the issue has been discussed. This flexibility and emotional intelligence appear central to her leadership style.

Intrinsic Motivation

The principal strongly supported intrinsic motivation, arguing that a teacher's love for their profession and students must outweigh external motivators like salary. She was critical of applicants interested in teaching primarily for financial reasons, stressing that

teaching requires emotional investment, creativity, and an understanding of students as individuals. Her belief in “non-standardised labour” reinforced her view that the work of teachers cannot be confined to rigid schedules or superficial assessments. Instead, it is “a long-term project with children,” demanding patience, understanding, and commitment.

Leadership Style

She described her leadership as low-intervention but highly informed. Although she does not frequently observe lessons directly, she relies on vice-principals and feedback mechanisms to stay informed about classroom practices. She discouraged performative work done solely to impress administrators, encouraging teachers to focus on sustained, meaningful student engagement. “Teaching is not about glitter,” she said. “It’s about invisible, quality work.”

In her view, most teachers in her school are satisfied with their work, although she acknowledged external challenges, such as interactions with parents, as potential sources of stress. Overall, her leadership approach blends accountability with empathy, structure with flexibility, and professional rigour with deep respect for the human side of teaching. She believes that when teachers are treated with respect, encouraged to be creative, and supported emotionally and professionally, they are more likely to feel happy in their roles, stay motivated, and continue working in the profession long-term.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

This section explores teachers’ perspectives on how the principal’s leadership style affects their job satisfaction, addressing Research Question 4. Teachers described job satisfaction as a complex and dynamic construct shaped by various interrelated factors, including leadership, professional relationships, workload, and growth opportunities. While none of the participants reported complete satisfaction, their responses indicated varying degrees of contentment, often expressed in approximate terms ranging from 50%

to 80%. One teacher noted, “Let’s put it this way — if I weren’t satisfied with this job, or if I didn’t fit in here, I simply wouldn’t be working here.” This reflects a pragmatic viewpoint that acknowledges both the positive and challenging aspects of their professional experience.

Rather than viewing job satisfaction as an absolute condition, teachers described it as a negotiated balance between professional fulfilment and daily constraints. Their responses highlight the central role of principal leadership in shaping their work environment, influencing both motivation and retention. The following sections present key themes from the data, demonstrating how leadership practices impact teachers’ satisfaction, well-being, and long-term commitment to the profession.

Working Conditions and Available Resources

The availability of adequate resources and supportive working conditions emerged as significant factors influencing teachers’ job satisfaction. For many participants, access to necessary materials and a well-maintained environment contributed not only to teaching effectiveness but also fostered a sense of ease, confidence, and professional pride.

Gaukhar expressed feeling satisfied and well-supported in her daily work. She shared, “I have everything I need: a personal classroom, internet access, a computer, and an interactive whiteboard that allows me to teach effectively.” She emphasised that her working conditions enabled her to focus on teaching without worrying about logistical barriers. “Financially, all my basic work-related needs are covered,” she noted, adding that the school even provided a presentation paper. This level of resource availability contributed to her sense of professional stability and job satisfaction.

Aigerim also spoke positively about the school’s working conditions and credited the principal’s leadership for ensuring that resources were distributed fairly and consistently. “All available resources allocated by the government are provided to us,” she

said, highlighting the principal's ability to secure funding and maintain partnerships that benefit the school. These conditions, she noted, helped create a professional environment where teachers felt respected and equipped to succeed. Although Aigerim did not quantify her satisfaction directly, her tone suggested a high level of appreciation and pride in her workplace.

However, not all teachers expressed the same degree of contentment. One participant reported that delays in accessing basic teaching supplies, such as printer cartridges and paper, led to frustration. These delays occasionally forced teachers to purchase materials, negatively affecting her job satisfaction. While she acknowledged that the school generally aimed to provide what was needed, the inconsistency in availability created stress and a sense of being unsupported.

Despite this variation, most teachers regarded their working conditions as a positive aspect of their job experience. Reliable access to resources made them feel more confident in their teaching and less burdened by logistical concerns. For many, this translated into a stronger sense of belonging and motivation to continue working at the school.

Professional Development and Career Growth

Professional development and career growth opportunities emerged as key contributors to teacher satisfaction at the school. In interviews, teachers consistently expressed that the availability of meaningful training and leadership support made them feel appreciated, motivated, and empowered in their roles.

Aigerim noted that professional development opportunities are not restricted by a five-year waiting period, which she found beneficial. This flexibility allowed her to pursue training when she felt necessary rather than waiting for eligibility. She associated this

openness with increased job satisfaction, explaining that timely access to professional development helps her stay motivated and professionally engaged.

Aliya also emphasised the school leadership's commitment to supporting teachers' growth. She mentioned that some teachers were offered the opportunity to receive training abroad and spoke positively about the value of such initiatives. Referring to a program in Singapore, she said, "This kind of knowledge exchange helps us grow and improve our teaching practices." Although she did not participate herself, her comments highlighted how access to international experiences contributes to a shared sense of professional growth and pride among staff.

Gaukhar similarly appreciated the opportunities for professional learning, particularly those connected to partnerships with organisations like Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS). She stated, "If we want to improve or refresh our knowledge, we are given opportunities." Gaukhar also mentioned that English language courses were made available to teachers, which she saw as helpful for those interested in enhancing their skills.

Participants noted that professional development at the school follows a structured system. Teachers receive curated lists of available courses and are encouraged to select those that align with their interests. Many participants viewed this structure positively, associating it with a sense of support and professional respect, contributing to their job satisfaction.

However, not all professional growth experiences led to positive feelings. Aliya described declining job satisfaction after being reassigned from high school to elementary education. Previously engaged with older students and extracurricular activities, she felt that her new assignment limited her opportunities for professional growth. Her experience

underscores the importance of considering teacher preferences and strengths when making such decisions.

Gulmira offered a broader perspective on job satisfaction, describing it as an ongoing process. She explained, “There is no limit to being satisfied,” suggesting that the ability to continue learning and growing professionally is central to maintaining motivation over time.

Overall, participants expressed that professional development and career growth opportunities positively influenced their job satisfaction, particularly when aligned with their interests and supported by leadership. When teachers were granted autonomy and access to meaningful learning, they reported feeling more engaged and supported in their roles. However, when decisions regarding their professional paths were made without their input, it negatively impacted their job satisfaction.

Leadership

The principal’s leadership style significantly influences the overall school culture and teachers’ job satisfaction. Most teachers view the principal’s approach as enhancing their job satisfaction; however, one teacher perceives it as a source of dissatisfaction.

Gulmira emphasised that leadership is closely tied to her motivation and engagement as a teacher. “If there are no conditions, I wouldn’t have the motivation to work,” she said, clearly linking her job satisfaction to the environment created by the principal. She explained that her motivation increases when the principal provides necessary support—whether through resources, encouragement, or flexibility—and she feels more fulfilled in her role. “When teachers are provided with the right conditions, their motivation to work naturally increases,” she added, suggesting that effective leadership helps her feel both capable and satisfied in her work.

Aigerim shared a similar view, describing the principal as tireless and inspiring. “She never seems to get tired—always managing everything,” Aigerim said admiringly. She appreciated that the principal encouraged innovation and responsibility among teachers, making her feel professionally valued. This admiration led to a more profound sense of purpose and satisfaction in her role. Aigerim acknowledged the weight of a principal’s responsibilities, expressed empathy for the position, and ultimately viewed the leadership style as uplifting and motivating.

Aliya also spoke positively about the impact of leadership on her professional satisfaction. After being recognised by the principal for her students’ achievements in an international competition, she recalled feeling proud and validated: “For a teacher, being recognised among 200 colleagues and hearing ‘You stood out’ is a significant achievement.” She described how this public recognition increased her confidence and made her feel respected by both her peers and the administration. This experience left her feeling more motivated and satisfied in her role as a teacher.

However, not all teachers felt positive about the leadership approach. Samal described the principal’s expectations as excessive and emotionally draining. “I’m completely dissatisfied because the expectations are extremely high,” she said, explaining that the pressure to meet such high standards left her feeling stressed and undervalued. “To keep up, it feels like you would need to dedicate yourself entirely to work,” she added, suggesting that the demanding environment negatively affected her well-being and overall job satisfaction. Her comments reflected a sense of imbalance and burnout stemming from unrealistic expectations.

In summary, teachers’ feelings about the principal’s leadership were mixed but deeply felt. For many, supportive and motivating leadership enhanced their satisfaction, confidence, and professional fulfilment. However, when expectations became too

demanding or support was perceived as lacking, teachers like Samal experienced frustration and dissatisfaction. These varied perspectives highlight the powerful influence of school leadership on teacher morale, underscoring the importance of finding a balance between encouragement and pressure in leadership practices.

Workplace Relationships

The significance of workplace relationships in shaping teacher satisfaction is notable. Many teachers identified these connections as a key factor in their job satisfaction, with some even stating that their relationships with colleagues were vital in their decision to remain in the profession.

Aliya's story clearly illustrates this impact. Initially uncertain about pursuing a teaching career, she experienced a change in her mindset mainly due to the support she received from her colleagues and school leadership. "I can't say that being a teacher was my childhood dream," she said, "but over the past three years, I've realised that I want to continue in this profession." After graduating, she had forgotten much of what she had learned, but encouragement and mentorship from vice-principals and colleagues helped her regain her confidence and grow professionally. Aliya expressed that this support made her feel "motivated and seen," emphasising that it was a key reason for her decision to stay in the field. These reflections reveal how workplace relationships not only enhance daily experiences but also influence long-term career satisfaction.

Gaukhar also highlighted the emotional value of collegial support. Upon returning to work after maternity leave, she described being met with openness and kindness: "If I asked for help, everyone was there for me—a friendly team." This welcoming environment made her feel genuinely included and reduced the stress of returning to work. For Gaukhar, this atmosphere directly contributed to her sense of satisfaction and stability at work.

These examples support the principal's earlier mentioned expectations that vice-principals should be open and supportive, especially toward new teachers. When educators feel embraced and backed by their colleagues, they are more likely to engage meaningfully in their work, underscoring the importance of a welcoming and collaborative school culture.

In conclusion, workplace relationships fundamentally shape teachers' experiences and job satisfaction. Aliya and Gaukhar's experiences demonstrate that teachers' overall job satisfaction improves when they feel emotionally supported and connected. This sense of belonging, trust, and encouragement strengthens their engagement and increases their likelihood of staying in the profession.

Atmosphere Among Colleagues

The atmosphere among colleagues at the school is generally described as friendly, professional, and supportive. All teachers emphasised that positive workplace relationships significantly contribute to their job satisfaction. Several teachers noted that these collegial dynamics made them feel "comfortable," "respected," and "motivated" to perform well in their roles. They expressed appreciation for the sense of unity and mutual support within the teaching staff.

Many participants credited the principal's leadership for cultivating this positive environment. Aigerim and Gaukhar highlighted the principal's active role in organising staff events and encouraging collaboration, which they believed helped build a culture of trust and camaraderie. Gaukhar, who recently returned from maternity leave, shared that the absence of competitiveness among colleagues made her transition back to work smooth and stress-free, thereby increasing her overall satisfaction.

Gulmira also stressed the importance of positive faculty relationships, noting how integrated classes encouraged collaboration across departments. She described the work

culture as one where “everyone is open to helping each other” and explained that while some competition exists, it remains healthy and does not disrupt teamwork. She emphasised the absence of gossip as a crucial factor contributing to a sense of safety and professionalism, which allowed her to focus on her work without emotional distractions.

The principal was consistently recognised as central to shaping this collegial atmosphere. As Gulmira said, “The principal’s behaviour sets the standard for our interactions.” Her respectful and professional approach inspired teachers to mirror the same attitude, fostering a workplace where mutual respect and support are the norms. New staff members, even those who initially communicated more informally, were observed to gradually adopt the school’s professional tone, reinforcing the consistency of the culture.

In addition to promoting respectful relationships, the principal was described as uplifting staff morale through small but meaningful gestures. Some teachers mentioned receiving motivational books and videos from the principal, which they found inspiring and made them feel “noticed” and “encouraged,” further enhancing their sense of belonging and satisfaction.

Beyond peer relationships, all teachers noted that the quality of interactions between teachers, parents, and school leadership also shaped their job satisfaction. Aliya, for instance, appreciated the quarterly open discussions, which allowed feedback and ideas to be shared, fostering a sense of community and teamwork.

However, not all feedback was entirely positive. Samal expressed that the limited number of team-building activities negatively affected her sense of connection with colleagues. She pointed out that there were few opportunities to bond outside of work responsibilities, and there were only two events per year. Furthermore, she described how some teachers were cautious in their daily interactions due to concerns about potential

parental complaints. This cautiousness created a sense of emotional vigilance that detracted from her job satisfaction.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, examining both teachers' and principals' perceptions. The findings indicate that teachers appreciate structured leadership, clear goal-setting, and opportunities for professional development. However, some also reported feeling burdened by high expectations and demanding workloads.

Workplace relationships emerged as a key contributor to teacher satisfaction. Strong collegial bonds were associated with increased motivation and morale. Nonetheless, several participants expressed a need for more intentional team-building activities to strengthen collaboration and support among staff further. Effective communication and decision-making processes were recognized as important leadership practices. Yet, frequent performance evaluations were reported to contribute to stress and anxiety for some teachers, suggesting a need to balance accountability with emotional well-being.

Access to teaching resources and the quality of working conditions also significantly influenced satisfaction levels. While the school's infrastructure and administrative support were generally seen as strengths, occasional delays in providing materials present challenges to effective teaching.

The findings suggest that leadership style, professional development opportunities, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions interact complexly to shape teacher satisfaction. The following chapter will interpret these findings through the lens of existing literature and the study's theoretical frameworks, assessing how the findings align with previous research on educational leadership and teacher job satisfaction.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the study's key findings in relation to the existing literature and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. The study explored how principal leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan, drawing on perspectives from both the principal and teachers.

The discussion is organized around the four subsidiary research questions: i) the principal's perceptions of her leadership style; ii) teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership style; iii) the principal's perceptions of how her leadership influences teacher job satisfaction; and iv) teachers' perceptions of this relationship. The chapter critically evaluates how the findings align with or diverge from prior research and considers implications within Kazakhstan's changing educational landscape.

The Principal's Perceptions of Her Leadership Styles

The first research question aimed to explore the principal's own perceptions of her leadership style. Principal Zhanar's reflections on her leadership approach reveal a dynamic integration of several prominent leadership styles identified in the literature: transformational, distributed, ethical, and people-oriented. Her practices, as she describes them, are not confined to a single model but rather represent a context-sensitive blend aimed at fostering a positive and productive school environment.

Zhanar's leadership exhibits strong transformational leadership characteristics, particularly through the dimensions of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Her commitment to "setting expectations for herself first" and consistently modelling behaviours such as punctuality, professionalism, and empathy aligns with the concept of idealised influence. By embodying these high standards, she cultivates trust and admiration among her staff, encouraging them to emulate these values (Chebon et al., 2019). This is especially

important for novice teachers who, as Zhanar recognises, look to experienced leaders for behavioural and professional cues, emphasising the role of modelling in shaping school culture (Blase & Anderson, 1995, as cited in Shamatov, 2023).

Equally evident is Zhanar's use of inspirational motivation. Her communication of long-term goals, such as promoting English proficiency in STEM subjects and nurturing student leadership, serves as a compelling vision that energises and guides her staff. Her description of research as a "vast, bottomless sea" is more than a metaphor; it reflects her belief in the value of lifelong learning and aligns with transformational leaders' ability to instil a sense of purpose in their followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999). Through such vision-setting, Zhanar seeks to foster not only academic success but also the holistic development of students and teachers alike.

Zhanar also demonstrates a commitment to intellectual stimulation, encouraging her staff to innovate, reflect, and strive for continuous improvement. Her leadership philosophy: "the moment you think you have reached your peak, your development stops," demonstrates an intentional effort to cultivate a growth mindset. This resonates with Leithwood et al. (1999), who describe intellectual stimulation as the process of challenging staff to question assumptions and consider new approaches. Zhanar's pursuit of personal and institutional development through initiatives such as school-wide digitalisation and international training serves both as an example and a stimulus for staff development. In doing so, she creates a culture that values ongoing learning, adaptability, and innovation.

Complementing her transformational style is a clear investment in distributed leadership. Zhanar supports distributed models, stating, "The principal does not work alone," and emphasises the important roles of her vice-principals in areas such as academic affairs, research development, and extracurricular coordination. Beyond administrative delegation, her establishment of the 56-member Damu team, composed of teachers with

leadership potential, illustrates her commitment to inclusive and participatory governance. This structure aligns with Spillane's (2006) conception of distributed leadership as a process enacted through interaction and shared expertise. As Harris (2013) suggests, distributed leadership fosters teacher agency and ownership, essential for building a collaborative school culture. Zhanar's approach, where teachers contribute actively to strategic planning, supports findings by Somech (2005) and Hartley (2010), who argue that distributed leadership enhances job satisfaction by valuing teacher input.

Zhanar's leadership is also deeply rooted in ethical and moral principles. She emphasises fairness, transparency, and integrity as non-negotiable aspects of school leadership, aligning closely with definitions of ethical leadership proposed by Brown and Treviño (2006). Her decision to dismiss a vice-principal involved in corrupt practices, despite that person's qualifications, signals a strong moral compass and a commitment to modelling ethical behaviour. As Neubert et al. (2009) and Hoch et al. (2016) argue, such actions help establish a culture of trust and justice, contributing to teacher satisfaction and a supportive work environment. Zhanar's rejection of competitions or certificates involving favouritism further highlights her principled stance and belief in merit-based recognition.

Finally, Zhanar demonstrates elements of people-oriented leadership (Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018) through her emphasis on listening to feedback, particularly from new teachers, and her focus on communication and relationship building. By actively seeking the perspectives of newcomers, she fosters a sense of value and inclusion. Her commitment to open communication and acknowledgement of the contributions of all staff members, regardless of their role, underscores her focus on interpersonal relationships and creating a positive school climate. This approach aligns with open leadership principles

(Blase & Anderson, 1995, as cited in Shamatov, 2023) and contributes to teacher well-being.

In summary, Principal Zhanar perceives her leadership style as an integrated model that draws from transformational, distributed, ethical, and people-oriented approaches. This multifaceted style emphasises vision, collaboration, integrity, and a focus on people, aligning with the literature that suggests such adaptable and context-sensitive leadership is crucial for fostering a positive school environment and potentially enhancing teacher job satisfaction (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). The subsequent analysis of teacher perceptions will provide a valuable comparison to understand how these leadership styles are experienced by her staff.

The Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Styles

The second research question examined teachers' perceptions of Principal Zhanar's leadership styles. Teachers' views reveal a complex interplay of various leadership styles identified in the literature, including transactional and transformational approaches and elements of democratic authoritarian styles. Additionally, there are aspects of people-oriented leadership present. Their experiences suggest that Zhanar's leadership is not rigid but rather manifests differently across various aspects of school operation and teacher interaction, aligning with the notion that effective leadership often involves a blend of styles (Yukl, 2013).

Teachers perceive elements of transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) in Zhanar's emphasis on high expectations and accountability. The structured approach to lesson planning and resource utilisation, driven by her demands, aligns with a focus on clear expectations and performance standards, a key characteristic of transactional leadership where leaders set explicit expectations and monitor performance (McCleskey, 2014). The potential consequence of dismissal for unmet expectations, as noted by

Gaukhar, reinforces a transactional approach where adherence to rules and outcomes is paramount, potentially reflecting management by exception-active where deviations are proactively addressed (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Similarly, Samal's experience of frequent inquiries and the need for constant updates can be seen as a form of active management by exception (McCleskey, 2014), where the leader closely monitors performance and seeks immediate feedback. While transactional leadership can provide clarity and structure (Somech, 2005), overemphasising monitoring and potential punitive measures can negatively impact teacher morale and job satisfaction (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

However, teachers also experience aspects of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Zhanar's articulation of school goals, such as the dual diploma program and infrastructure improvements, demonstrates a degree of inspirational motivation by providing a vision for the future that energises and directs staff towards shared objectives (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Her support for new ideas and innovation, as highlighted by Aigerim and Gulmira, aligns with intellectual stimulation, encouraging teachers to think creatively and contribute to school improvement by challenging established assumptions (Leithwood et al., 1999). Furthermore, her efforts to provide professional development opportunities can be seen as individualised consideration, supporting teachers' growth and development by attending to their individual needs (Bass & Avolio, 1994). These transformational elements are often associated with higher levels of teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Hariri et al., 2016).

Elements of democratic leadership (Ch et al., 2017) are evident in the opportunities for teacher input in decision-making, particularly through voluntary participation in discussions and the Damu team. While not all teachers engage equally, the structure allows for voices to be heard and for collaborative initiatives to emerge, aligning with the principles of shared governance and fostering a sense of empowerment (Daily, 2018).

Research suggests that such participative leadership is linked to higher levels of teacher satisfaction (Somech, 2005).

Conversely, some teachers' experiences suggest potential leanings towards a more directive or even authoritarian style in specific contexts. The high demands and the consequence of dismissal for non-compliance, as mentioned by Gaukhar, indicate a strong emphasis on top-down authority and adherence to standards, potentially creating a climate of fear rather than intrinsic motivation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This contrasts with the empowering nature of transformational and distributed leadership.

Finally, teachers perceive elements of people-oriented leadership (Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018) in Zhanar's efforts to motivate and support her staff. The provision of salary bonuses and formal recognition through certificates acts as contingent rewards and a transactional motivator, but it also acknowledges teachers' hard work and contribution, potentially increasing job satisfaction (Elmazi, 2018). Her open-door policy, while not resulting in frequent informal interactions, suggests a willingness to address concerns, a characteristic of supportive leadership. The emphasis on resolving issues at the appropriate level indicates a structured support system, though the lack of frequent informal contact might limit the development of stronger interpersonal relationships often associated with higher levels of teacher satisfaction in teamwork and collegiality (Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018).

In summary, teachers' perceptions of Principal Zhanar's leadership style reveal a blend of transactional emphasis on expectations and accountability, transformational elements of vision and support for innovation, democratic opportunities for input, and potential leanings towards a more directive approach in certain situations, alongside some indications of people-oriented support. This multifaceted perception highlights the complexity of leadership in practice, where different styles can coexist and be experienced

uniquely by individual staff members. The interplay between these perceived leadership styles and their impact on teacher job satisfaction will be further explored in the subsequent analysis.

The Principal's Perceptions of Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

Principal Zhanar explicitly links her leadership practices to her perceptions of teacher job satisfaction, believing that a strategic blend of various leadership styles directly influences teachers' motivation, well-being, and professional fulfilment. Her reflections suggest a conscious effort to cultivate a work environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and intrinsically motivated, ultimately leading to higher job satisfaction.

First, Zhanar highlights fairness and ethical conduct as foundational to teacher satisfaction. Her belief that "where there is fairness, work will always happen" reflects the ethical leadership paradigm, which emphasizes integrity, inclusivity, and justice (Brown & Treviño, 2006). She believes that fairness, honesty, and openness create a foundation of trust, which in turn fosters engagement and reduces dissatisfaction. This aligns with research indicating that ethical leadership promotes a supportive work environment, enhancing teachers' feelings of trust and respect, which are vital for job fulfilment (Yates, 2011).

She then directly connects innovation and creativity, fostered through her leadership, to preventing burnout and increasing job satisfaction. By continuously stimulating teachers with new projects, a key aspect of intellectual stimulation within transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), Zhanar aims to create a dynamic and engaging work environment. This proactive approach to preventing monotony is supported by studies suggesting that opportunities for creativity and professional growth are positively associated with teacher satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Her belief in balancing expectations with support is central to understanding teacher well-being and satisfaction. By pairing accountability with empathy, a hallmark of people-oriented leadership (Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018), Zhanar aims to create a supportive environment where teachers feel both challenged and cared for. Research suggests that a supportive principal who understands the demands of teaching contributes significantly to teacher job satisfaction and reduces stress (Day et al., 2016).

Zhanar strongly emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation over solely relying on external factors for job satisfaction. She believes a genuine love for teaching and students is the primary driver for long-term fulfilment. While not a direct leadership style, her efforts to cultivate this intrinsic drive by valuing creativity and individualized approaches to students align with creating a more meaningful and satisfying work experience for teachers (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Her low-intervention but highly informed leadership style, relying on delegation and feedback, suggests a belief that empowering teachers while staying aware of classroom practices contributes to their professional autonomy and satisfaction. This approach, with elements of distributed leadership, can foster a sense of trust and responsibility, positively impacting how teachers feel about their work (Hartley, 2010).

Overall, Principal Zhanar perceives a direct and positive relationship between her leadership styles, which include ethical principles, fostering innovation, providing recognition, balancing expectations with support, and promoting intrinsic motivation, as well as the job satisfaction of her teachers. She believes that by creating a fair, engaging, supportive, and respectful work environment, she can cultivate a motivated and satisfied teaching staff, ultimately contributing to the school's overall success. This aligns with a body of literature that consistently links transformational, ethical, and people-oriented

leadership behaviours to higher levels of teacher job satisfaction and retention (Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

Teachers' perceptions of the relationship between Principal Zhanar's leadership style and their job satisfaction reveal a nuanced interplay between leadership practices, professional growth opportunities, workplace conditions, and collegial dynamics. Overall, teachers viewed leadership as a central influence on their motivation, morale, and sense of fulfilment, consistent with existing literature that identifies principal leadership as a key driver of teacher satisfaction (Day et al., 2016; Nguni et al., 2006).

A significant theme that emerged was the importance of professional support and recognition in fostering satisfaction. Teachers who received verbal praise and public acknowledgement or were granted access to meaningful training reported higher levels of motivation and engagement. This aligns with the concept of individualised consideration, a core component of transformational leadership, in which leaders provide tailored support and attention to staff (Bakker et al., 2022; Bass & Avolio, 1994). For example, Aliya's sense of professional validation after being praised for her students' achievements illustrates how recognition can enhance intrinsic motivation and long-term job satisfaction, as emphasised by Judge and Piccolo (2004).

Teachers also noted that the principal's emphasis on professional development opportunities, particularly through external partnerships and international programs, was critical to their ongoing growth. These perceptions echo findings by Hariri et al. (2016) and Nazim and Mahmood (2018), who showed that transformational leaders prioritising intellectual stimulation and capacity-building tend to elevate teacher satisfaction and organisational commitment.

However, the data also indicate that not all effects of leadership are uniformly positive. Some teachers, like Samal, expressed dissatisfaction due to the principal's high expectations and perceived emotional demands. Her account reflects the pressure that can arise when a transformational approach is not balanced with emotional sensitivity or when it borders on a task-oriented, transactional style. While goal-setting and accountability are essential aspects of transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006), research warns that excessive oversight or unmet expectations can reduce morale (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). This finding is particularly relevant in light of Bass' (1985) assertion that transactional leadership may meet performance goals when used in isolation but not necessarily inspire commitment or satisfaction.

Teachers' perceptions of the principal's supportive communication and ethical behaviour contributed significantly to job satisfaction. The principal's efforts to create a respectful, inclusive, and motivating environment align with the principles of ethical leadership, which emphasise fairness, transparency, and dignity in professional interactions (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Neubert et al., 2009). Teachers appreciated her effort to separate constructive feedback from personal criticism, reinforcing the importance of emotional intelligence and mutual respect, key aspects of ethical and transformational leadership.

Furthermore, the collaborative atmosphere and collegial relationships nurtured under the principal's leadership enhanced teachers' sense of belonging. Teachers repeatedly emphasised how peer support and a professional school culture increased their job satisfaction, resonating with findings by Somech (2005) and Hartley (2010) on the benefits of distributed leadership. These relationships, often facilitated by the principal's inclusive and empowering style, reflect the collective, participatory dimension of leadership that supports sustained teacher engagement.

Despite general positivity, some teachers reported gaps in emotional support and team-building initiatives, which they felt limited opportunities for deeper connection and renewal. These insights highlight the importance of fostering not just professional collaboration but also interpersonal cohesion, echoing Jošanov-Vrgović and Pavlović's (2018) argument that people-oriented leadership, marked by empathy and attention to teachers' emotional needs, can significantly influence job satisfaction.

Finally, perceptions of working conditions and resource availability further demonstrated how leadership impacts satisfaction through practical, day-to-day support. Most teachers felt empowered and equipped to teach effectively, but delays in resource provision, especially when teachers had to self-fund basic materials, were viewed as signs of insufficient support, undermining trust and satisfaction. These mixed experiences underline the need for consistency in resource management as a component of effective leadership.

To conclude, teachers in this study largely viewed Principal Zhanar's leadership style as a key factor in their job satisfaction, citing her supportive yet demanding approach as both motivating and professionally fulfilling. This aligns with research on transformational leadership, emphasising the importance of individualised support, inspirational motivation, and a shared vision in enhancing teacher morale and engagement (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bogler, 2001; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Teachers also valued fair communication, collegial relationships, and opportunities for professional development, reflecting findings on ethical leadership and distributed leadership as contributors to job satisfaction (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018; Somech, 2005). However, some reported stress linked to high expectations and occasional resource delays, echoing concerns in the literature about the potential downsides of overly transactional or bureaucratic environments (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Nurmukhanova, 2020). Overall, the

findings support the view that a balanced, transformational leadership approach, complemented by ethical considerations and attention to collegial support and resources, fosters a positive and motivating school climate conducive to teacher job satisfaction.

Relationship between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

The central research question of this study aimed to explore the principal's and teachers' perceptions of the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The findings reveal a significant alignment between the principal's espoused leadership philosophy and the teachers' experiences, with both groups recognising the profound impact of leadership on job satisfaction. However, the nuances within these perceptions highlight the complexities of enacting and experiencing leadership in a real-world educational setting.

From Principal Zhanar's perspective, her leadership is consciously constructed to foster teacher satisfaction through a blend of transformational, ethical, and distributed practices. Her emphasis on setting high standards while providing individualised support and promoting a shared vision aligns directly with transformational leadership theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Her commitment to fairness and transparency, indicative of ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006), is seen as a foundational element for building trust and motivation. Furthermore, her efforts to empower teachers through initiatives like the "Damu" team reflect a belief that distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) enhances ownership and professional fulfilment.

Teachers largely corroborated the influence of these leadership facets on their job satisfaction. They valued the principal's visionary approach, the opportunities for professional development (intellectual stimulation), and the recognition of their efforts (individualised consideration), all key components of transformational leadership that have been consistently linked to positive teacher outcomes (Bogler, 2001; Hariri et al., 2016).

The collaborative ethos fostered through distributed leadership initiatives was also appreciated, contributing to a sense of professional community and shared purpose, which research suggests enhances job satisfaction (Hartley, 2010; Somech, 2005). Moreover, the principal's perceived commitment to ethical principles fostered a climate of trust and respect, which is vital for teacher well-being (Yates, 2011).

However, the study also revealed areas where the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction was perceived with more complexity. Some teachers experienced the principal's high expectations, a characteristic that can be associated with both transformational and transactional leadership, as potentially leading to stress and emotional strain, echoing concerns raised in the literature about the demands of principal leadership (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Nurmukhanova, 2020). While goal-oriented leadership can drive performance, its impact on satisfaction hinges on the perceived balance between support and recognition (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Furthermore, while the principal emphasised a people-oriented approach, some teachers noted gaps in emotional support and team-building opportunities, suggesting a potential area for growth in fostering deeper interpersonal connections and addressing the emotional needs of staff. This aligns with research highlighting the importance of people-oriented leadership in enhancing job satisfaction through empathy and attention to teacher well-being (Jošanov-Vrgović & Pavlović, 2018).

Finally, inconsistencies in the provision of resources, while not directly a leadership style, were perceived by some teachers as a lack of support, indirectly impacting their satisfaction. This underscores the importance of effective management and the tangible support leaders provide in influencing how teachers feel about their work environment.

Overall, the findings suggest that a leadership approach that predominantly embraces transformational, ethical, and distributed principles is positively associated with teacher job satisfaction in this Kazakhstani school. However, the study also highlights the critical need for a balanced enactment of these styles, ensuring that high expectations are coupled with adequate emotional support and consistent, practical resources. The nuances in teacher perceptions underscore that the impact of leadership on job satisfaction is not solely determined by the espoused style but also by its consistent and empathetic application in the daily realities of the school environment.

These findings contribute to the broader understanding of educational leadership by providing context-specific insights from Kazakhstan, where the educational landscape is undergoing significant changes (Nurmukhanova, 2020; OECD, 2014). The study reinforces the importance of adaptable and context-sensitive leadership that prioritises both professional growth and the well-being of teachers in fostering a positive and satisfying work environment.

Relevance to Educational Policy, Practice, and Theory

This study offers important implications for educational policy, practice, and theory, particularly within the context of Kazakhstan's ongoing educational reforms.

For policy, the findings highlight the need for frameworks that promote the development of principals skilled in transformational, ethical, and distributed leadership. Professional development programs should balance theoretical foundations with practical leadership skills, while policy initiatives should encourage collaborative leadership models and address systemic issues like teacher workload and resource limitations.

In practice, the study emphasizes the importance of principal self-awareness, reflective leadership, and ongoing staff feedback. Setting high expectations must be coupled with consistent support, recognition, and opportunities for professional growth.

Initiatives like the “Damu” team illustrate the value of fostering teacher participation in decision-making and school improvement efforts.

In terms of theory, the study extends the literature by providing context-specific insights into principal leadership in Kazakhstan. It affirms the positive impact of transformational, ethical, and distributed leadership on teacher satisfaction while also identifying contextual nuances, such as the stress linked to high expectations and the critical role of resource provision. These findings suggest directions for future research on balancing leadership styles and adapting leadership practices to diverse educational settings.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter critically discusses the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction based on the perspectives of principals and teachers in a public school in Almaty. The findings highlighted the influence of transformational, distributed, ethical, and, to some extent, transactional leadership practices on teacher motivation, professional growth, and well-being. While leadership practices such as setting a clear vision, providing professional development, and fostering collaboration positively contributed to satisfaction, challenges also emerged, including pressures from high expectations and occasional resource limitations. The discussion integrated these findings with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, emphasizing the complexity and context-sensitivity of effective school leadership. Finally, the chapter outlined the study’s relevance to educational policy, leadership practice, and theory in Kazakhstan, highlighting the need for balanced, supportive, and ethically grounded leadership to foster teacher satisfaction and school improvement.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study that explored the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine how both the principal and the teachers perceive the principal's leadership and how these perceptions relate to teacher satisfaction. The chapter is divided into four main sections: a synthesis of findings based on the research questions, implications and recommendations for practice and policy, limitations of the research, and final reflections on the study's contribution.

Revisiting the Main Research Question

Main Research Question: What are the principal's and teachers' perceptions of the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan?

The findings of this study indicate that both the principal and the teachers perceive leadership as a central factor influencing teacher job satisfaction. The principal emphasises ethical conduct, clear standards, and long-term vision as essential elements of her leadership, while teachers associate satisfaction with fairness, recognition, professional growth, and emotional support. Both groups acknowledge that leadership practices influence motivation, morale, and commitment. Transformational leadership, particularly through behaviours such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, is identified as particularly effective in promoting satisfaction. Transactional leadership practices are also noted, with mixed responses: while some teachers value the structure and accountability it provides, others express concern over emotional strain or pressure. Overall, this alignment between the principal's intent and the teachers' perceptions underscores the significance of leadership in shaping a supportive and motivating school environment.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer several important implications for educational practice, school leadership, and policy development in Kazakhstan's public school context. They demonstrate that leadership styles significantly influence teacher job satisfaction, motivation, and overall professional well-being. These implications are relevant not only for school principals but also for policymakers, teacher training institutions, and educational reform stakeholders.

First, the study reinforces the critical role of leadership in shaping a supportive and productive school climate. Principals should receive targeted training that emphasises relational and instructional leadership practices. Specifically, leadership programmes should develop principals' capacity to foster fairness, maintain open communication, provide emotional support, and promote professional growth among teachers. Building leadership competencies in these areas is essential for cultivating trust, motivation, and long-term teacher engagement.

At the policy level, education reform efforts should move beyond structural changes and focus on strengthening leadership practices that directly impact school climate and teacher well-being. Policymakers should ensure that national leadership development frameworks integrate transformational, distributed, and ethical leadership principles and offer practical strategies for supporting teacher agency and autonomy.

Further research should be conducted across different regions and school types in Kazakhstan, including private and rural schools, to explore variations in how leadership styles affect teacher satisfaction. Expanding the participant pool to include educators with diverse professional backgrounds, gender identities, and years of experience would offer a more comprehensive and generalisable understanding of effective leadership practices.

Comparative studies could also show how cultural and contextual factors influence leadership dynamics and teacher satisfaction in Kazakhstan's evolving education system.

Research Limitations

Despite the valuable insights this study provides into the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, several limitations should be acknowledged. These include using a single case study site, a small sample size, and the potential for participant bias, all of which may influence the interpretation and transferability of the findings.

First, the study was conducted in one public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. While this site was purposefully selected for its accessibility, relevance to the research objectives, and willingness of the administration to participate, the uniqueness of its context limits the generalizability of the findings. The school's specific leadership structure, cultural environment, and demographic composition may not fully reflect the experiences of other schools in Almaty or across the country. Consequently, the insights gained should be viewed as context-specific rather than representative of all educational settings in Kazakhstan.

Second, the study's sample consisted of one principal and five teachers, which, although appropriate for qualitative case study research, constrains the range of perspectives represented. A broader participant pool, including educators from different schools, grade levels, or regional backgrounds, may have uncovered additional dimensions of leadership and teacher satisfaction. The small sample size also limits the ability to explore possible variations in perceptions based on gender, years of experience, or subject specialisation.

Next, there is a potential for participant bias that may have influenced the data. Given the hierarchical nature of school environments in Kazakhstan, teachers might have

felt hesitant to speak openly about sensitive topics such as leadership challenges or dissatisfaction with administrative practices. Although ethical measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation, participants may have provided socially desirable responses or withheld critical viewpoints. Despite these limitations, this study fills a gap by providing empirical evidence on leadership styles and teacher satisfaction in Kazakhstan's public schools, a relatively under-researched area.

Final Reflections

Conducting this study has been a transformative experience that deepened my understanding of educational leadership and the complex factors influencing teacher job satisfaction. Through interviews, I gained valuable insights into how leadership is practised and perceived in Kazakhstani schools.

It was particularly rewarding to listen to teachers discuss their professional identities, motivations, and challenges. Their reflections emphasised that leadership is not just administrative but also relational, highlighting the importance of empathy, transparency, and collaboration.

The research process enhanced my methodological skills in areas such as site selection, participant recruitment, interviewing, and thematic analysis. I also became more aware of my ethical responsibilities regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and accurately representing participant voices.

Overcoming challenges like coordinating interviews and navigating hierarchical dynamics strengthened my adaptability and professional resilience. Ultimately, this study not only met its academic goals but also fueled my interest in how leadership can foster teacher growth and school improvement. I hope the findings contribute meaningfully to the discourse on educational leadership in Kazakhstan and provide practical value for those aiming to create supportive school environments.

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Appendix A: Declaration of the Use of Generative AI



Thesis Title: The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
 without the use of artificial intelligence tools.

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used Chat GPT, Grammarly, and Gemini AI to help with structuring, outlining, paraphrasing, grammar-checking, and proofreading my work.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
 have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
 am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
 have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and
 acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding AI appropriate use.

Name: Kassiyet Jumabekova
 Date: 28.04.2025

Signature: *Kassiyet*

Appendix B: Letter to the Gatekeeper

Dear _____,

My name is Kassiyet Jumabekova, and I am a student-researcher at MSc Educational Leadership of School Education program at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. I am conducting a research study titled “The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan”, which is part of my thesis. I am writing to formally request permission to conduct this study in your school.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore principal’s and teachers’ perceptions of relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. This research will provide valuable insights that could potentially benefit leadership development initiatives in Kazakhstan, benefiting educational practices in similar contexts.

I plan to conduct two semi-structured interviews with the school principal and five teachers. These interviews will be scheduled at the participants' convenience and will take between 45 to 60 minutes. All data collected will be confidential and anonymous. Participants’ identities and any identifying details about the school will not be disclosed in final thesis.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and the collected data will be ensured in accordance with the requirements of Nazarbayev University and ethical standards. Meaning that participants’ privacy will be protected, and they will be treated with respect. Participants will be fully informed of the study’s purpose, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their participation. I will also ensure that their involvement will not disrupt their professional responsibilities.

I would be grateful if you could provide permission to recruit participants from your school and conduct the interviews.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact me or my advisor:

a researcher: a MSc Education Leadership program student, Kassiyet Jumabekova,
kassiyet.jumabekova@nu.edu.kz

a thesis research advisor: Dr. Duishon Shamatov, Associate Professor at Graduate
School of Education, Nazarbayev University, duishonkul.shamatov@nu.edu.kz

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with your school and would be
happy to provide a summary of the research findings to your school once the study is
complete.

Sincerely,

Kassiyet Jumabekova,

Student-researcher,

Master of Science Educational Leadership in School Education,

Graduate School of Education,

Nazarbayev University.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol with a Teacher

Topic of the research: The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Time and date: _____

Location: _____

Interviewee: _____

I introduce myself, explain the goals of the research, and thank for agreeing to participate in my study.

I will remind him and her about consent form and get it signed.

I will ask him/her permission to record the interview.

I will share the purpose of my research that it aims to explore principal's and teachers' perceptions of relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Interview questions:

Research question #3. What are the teachers' perceptions of principal leadership styles?

1. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been working at this school?
2. How do you interact with the principal of your school?
3. What are the ways he works with the teachers?
4. How would you describe the way your principal leads or manages the school?
Could you give examples?
5. How does the principal set goals for himself and for others (for school)? Who does he involve and how?

6. How well are you guided by your principal? Could you give examples?
7. When you have concerns or ideas, how does the principal usually respond?

Research question #4. What are the teacher' perceptions of the relationship between principal's leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction?

1. To what extent do you and other teachers participate in school decision making process? Can you give examples? Why is it important?
2. What are some things your principal does that help you feel supported and motivated as a teacher?
3. Can you describe a time when you felt especially supported or empowered by the principal's actions or decisions?
4. How satisfied do you feel by your job? Why so? How is your job satisfaction related to your principal and his leadership? Please give examples.
5. What aspects of the principal's actions or decisions make your work feel more rewarding or enjoyable?
6. What does your principal do to create a positive working environment for teachers?
7. How do you think the way your principal manages the school impacts how you feel about your job?
 - a. or: How do you feel the principal's way of leading affects your day-to-day experience as a teacher?
8. How would you describe the overall atmosphere at the school, and what role do you think the principal plays in shaping that environment?
9. Do you have any questions or anything to add?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol with a Principal

Interview protocol with Principal

Topic of the research: The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Time and date: _____

Location: _____

Interviewee: _____

I introduce myself, explain the goals of the research, and thank for agreeing to participate in my study.

I will remind him and her about consent form and get it signed.

I will ask him/her permission to record the interview.

I will share the purpose of my research that it aims to explore principal's and teachers' perceptions of relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in a public school in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Interview questions:

Research question #1. What are the principals' perceptions of their leadership styles?

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. How long have you been working at this school?
3. How do you work as a principal? Can you describe your work? What you do and how you do your work?
4. How do you lead others? E.g., teachers? Can you describe your leadership styles?
5. Where and when did you learn about leadership and the approaches of leading others?

6. How has your work as a principal changed over time (if at all)? Can you describe?
7. When you think about your role as the principal, what do you believe matters most in how you lead and interact with the teachers?
8. How do you usually set goals for yourself and for others? What strategies do you use?
9. How do you set tasks and targets for your staff? How do you achieve that they achieve those goals? How do you motivate them?
10. What do you do if some members do not achieve goals?

Research question #2. What are the principals' perceptions of the relationship between their leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction?

1. In what ways do you see your actions or decisions affecting how teachers feel about their work here?
2. What do you believe makes your teachers feel motivated and satisfied in their roles?
3. Can you think of some key actions or decisions you take to support and motivate your teachers and the school?
4. How do you involve teachers into decision making?
5. What would make these procedures more effective?
6. Do you have any questions or anything to add?

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form for a Teacher

Dear _____,

My name is Kassiyet Jumabekova, I am a student of MSc Educational Leadership of School Education program at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. For my MSc thesis, I am conducting research titled “The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Public School in Almaty, Kazakhstan.”

I would like to invite you to participate in this research, which will include two semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these interviews are to understand your perceptions of principal leadership styles and their relations to teacher job satisfaction. The interviews will take between 45 to 60 minutes and will be conducted between the middle of November to the middle of December 2024. The date, time and place of the interviews will be negotiated and agreed with you. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. The recordings and transcripts will be securely stored in a password-protected file accessible only to me and my supervisor. All recordings will be deleted three years after the completion of the research.

To protect your identity, a pseudonym will be used, and any identifying information will be removed from the final thesis. No third parties will have access to the information you provide, and your participation will remain confidential.

Participation in this study may provide an opportunity for you to share your experiences and perspectives in a confidential setting which can serve as a valuable form of personal and professional reflection. Your input also could potentially benefit leadership development initiatives in Kazakhstan, benefiting educational practices in similar contexts.

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences or penalty. Additionally, you may choose not to answer certain questions. The findings of this research will be presented in the final thesis only.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact me or my advisor:

a researcher: a MSc Education Leadership program student, Kassiyet Jumabekova, kassiyet.jumabekova@nu.edu.kz

a thesis research advisor: Dr. Duishon Shamatov, Associate Professor at Graduate School of Education, duishonkul.shamatov@nu.edu.kz

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the GSE Research IREC subcommittee at gse.irec@nu.edu.kz.

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form for a Principal

Dear _____,

My name is Kassiyet Jumabekova, I am a student of MSc Educational Leadership of School Education program at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. As part of my MSc thesis, I am conducting research titled “The Relationship between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction.”

I would like to invite you to participate in this research, which will include two semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these interviews are to understand your perceptions of relationship your leadership styles and the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction. The interviews will take between 45 to 60 minutes and will be conducted between the middle of November to the middle of December 2024. The date, time and place of the interviews will be negotiated and agreed with you. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. The recordings and transcripts will be securely stored in a password-protected file accessible only to me and my supervisor. All recordings will be deleted three years after the completion of the research.

To protect your identity, pseudonyms will be used, and any identifying information will be removed from the final thesis. No third parties will have access to the information you provide, and your participation will remain confidential.

Participation in this study may provide an opportunity for you to share your experiences and perspectives in a confidential setting which can serve as a valuable form of personal and professional reflection. Your input also could potentially benefit leadership development initiatives in Kazakhstan, benefiting educational practices in similar contexts.

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences or penalty. Additionally, you may choose not to answer certain questions if they make you uncomfortable. The findings of this research will be presented in the final thesis only.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact me or my advisor:

a researcher: a MSc Education Leadership program student, Kassiyet Jumabekova, kassiyet.jumabekova@nu.edu.kz

a research advisor: Dr. Duishon Shamatov, Associate Professor at Graduate School of Education, duishonkul.shamatov@nu.edu.kz

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the GSE Research IREC subcommittee at gse.irec@nu.edu.kz.

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix G: Example of Interview Transcripts and Coding

Interview transcripts	Codes	Quotable quotes
<p>3. Сіз директор ретінде қалай жұмыс жасайсыз? Жұмысыңызды сипаттап бере аласыз ба?</p> <p>Негізі басшының міндеті, ол бірінші келген жеріне талдау жасау, кез келген мектепте. Мен осы мектепте от төрт жыл отырмын ба, сонында әлі де талдау істеймін, мен жылма жыл кез келген нәрсені талдау жасаймын. Содан кейін, талдаудан кейін жоспарлайсыз, одан кейін құрған жоспарыңыздың іске асыруын ұйымдастырасыз, ол да директордың міндеті, оны да ұйымдастырған әкімшіліктің де міндеті.</p> <p>Өйткені директор жалғыз істемейді ғой, директордың орынбасарлары да бар, әкімшіліктің міндеті. Қалай ұйымдастырасыз, біреуге тапсырма бересіз, енді сол ұйымдастыру барысында бақылайсыз, кім қалай жұмыс істеді, бақылау барысында мағлұматтар жиналады, сол мағлұматтың негізінде қайтадан талдау жасайсыз, міне негізгі басшының тікелей міндеті.</p> <p>Талдау, жоспарлау, ұйымдастыру, бақылау, келесі талдау, сөйтіп талдау бірінің іші бірі шығып отырады. Кез келеген жұмысты талдау деген көп.</p> <p>Содан кейін менің өзімнің орынбасарларым бар. Орынбасарлардың өздерінің міндеттері бар, біреуі тәрбиеге жауап береді, біреуі ғылыми зерттеу жұмысына жауап береді, біреуі оқу ісі жөнінде орынбасар. Сол сияқты әрқайсының олардың да жұмыстарын талдап отырасын.</p>	<p>Analysing as director</p> <p>Planning Organizing, Implementing</p> <p>Delegating work Monitoring others work</p> <p>Systemic analysis</p> <p>Vice-principal's work Ubringning Research Academic</p> <p>Analyse VP work</p> <p>VP knows analysis and organization</p>	<p><i>Өйткені директор жалғыз істемейді ғой, директордың орынбасарлары да бар, әкімшіліктің міндеті.</i></p> <p><i>Қалай ұйымдастырасыз, біреуге тапсырма бересіз, енді сол ұйымдастыру барысында бақылайсыз, кім қалай жұмыс істеді, бақылау барысында мағлұматтар жиналады, сол мағлұматтың негізінде қайтадан талдау жасайсыз, міне негізгі басшының тікелей міндеті.</i></p>