

**The Impact of School Principals' Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Satisfaction:
A Mixed Methods Study**

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in

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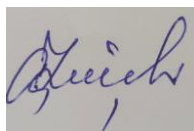
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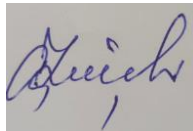


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This letter now confirms that your research project titled '*The Impact of School Principals' Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Satisfaction: A Mixed Methods Study*'

(a) has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

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

Yours sincerely,

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Abstract

The study examines how different school principal leadership styles of school principals affect teachers' job satisfaction in West Kazakhstan through a mixed-methods research approach that employs a convergent parallel research design. The research was conducted across four schools representing different contexts, including rural, urban, private, and regional schools. The quantitative data were collected through teacher surveys, which covered 81 teachers, while qualitative information was collected through semi-structured interviews with eight teachers and four principals.

The findings show that teachers achieve moderate job satisfaction levels across all school types, although different school types produce distinct satisfaction outcomes. Private schools demonstrated higher levels of both perceived school principal's leadership quality and teacher satisfaction, whereas rural schools showed lower levels. The statistical analysis showed strong positive relationships between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction with instructional, distributed, and transformational leadership. The regression analysis demonstrated that leadership functions as a key determinant of job satisfaction, it accounts for more than 50 percent of the variance, while demographic factors maintained a minor impact. The qualitative research results demonstrate that people-centered leadership and a supportive school climate, together with professional development programs and teacher recognition programs, can increase teacher job satisfaction. Excessive workload, together with administrative duties, can create negative effects on job satisfaction of teachers.

The educational leadership research in Kazakhstan lacks sufficient empirical studies, yet these findings provide both practical value and educational benefits for policy development and school improvement efforts.

Keywords: school principals; leadership styles; teacher job satisfaction; mixed methods; education reform in Kazakhstan; educational leadership

Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеу Батыс Қазақстандағы мектеп директорларының көшбасшылық стильдері мен мұғалімдердің жұмысқа қанағаттануына әсерін анықтауды көздейді. Зерттеу аралас әдістерге негізделген және әртүрлі мектеп контексттерін (ауылдық, қалалық, жекеменшік және мамандандырылған мектептер) қамтиды. Сандық деректер 81 мұғалімге жүргізілген сауалнама арқылы жиналды, ал сапалық деректер сегіз мұғалім мен төрт директорлармен жүргізілген жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттардан алынды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері мұғалімдердің жалпы жұмысқа қанағаттануы орташа деңгейде екенін және мектеп түріне байланысты айырмашылықтар бар екенін көрсетті. Жекеменшік мектептерде көшбасшылық сапасы мен мұғалімдердің жұмыспен қанағаттану деңгейі жоғары болса, ауылдық мектептерде төмен көрсеткіштер байқалды. Статистикалық талдау нәтижелері көшбасшылық стильдері (әсіресе нұсқаушы, үйлестірілген және трансформациялық көшбасшылық) мен мұғалімдердің жұмыспен қанағаттануы арасында күшті оң байланыс бар екенін көрсетті. Регрессиялық талдау көшбасшылық стилінің мұғалімдердің қанағаттануын анықтайтын негізгі фактор екенін дәлелдеді.

Сапалық нәтижелер адамдарға бағытталған көшбасшылық, қолайлы мектеп климаты, кәсіби даму мүмкіндіктері және мойындау мұғалімдердің жұмыспен қанағаттануын арттыратынын көрсетсе, ал шамадан тыс жұмыс жүктемесі мен әкімшілік талаптар қанағаттануды төмендететінін көрсетті. Зерттеу нәтижелері тиімді көшбасшылықтың маңыздылығын атап, мектеп басшыларын даярлау бағдарламаларында қолдаушы және ынтымақтастыққа негізделген тәсілдерді күшейту қажеттігін ұсынады.

Түйінді сөздер: мектеп директорларының көшбасшылық стильдері,
мұғалімдердің жұмыспен қанағаттануы, мектеп директорлары, аралас әдістер,
Қазақстан, білім берудегі көшбасшылық

Абстракт

Данное исследование направлено на изучение взаимосвязи между стилями лидерства директоров школ и удовлетворённостью учителей своей работой в Западном Казахстане. Исследование основано на смешанном методе и охватывает четыре типа школ: сельские, городские, частные и специализированные. Количественные данные были собраны с помощью анкетирования 81 учителя, а качественные данные получены посредством полу-структурированных интервью с восьмью учителями и четырьмя директорами.

Результаты показали, что уровень удовлетворённости учителей в целом является средним, при этом наблюдаются различия в зависимости от типа школы. В частных школах зафиксированы более высокие показатели лидерства и удовлетворённости, тогда как в сельских школах они ниже. Статистический анализ выявил сильную положительную связь между стилями лидерства (особенно инструктивным, распределённым и трансформационным) и удовлетворённостью учителей. Регрессионный анализ подтвердил, что лидерство является значимым предиктором удовлетворённости, объясняя более половины её вариации.

Качественные данные подчёркивают важность ориентированного на человека лидерства, благоприятного психологического климата, возможностей профессионального развития и признания. В то же время высокая нагрузка и административные требования снижают удовлетворённость работой учителей. Исследование делает вывод о ключевой роли эффективного лидерства и предлагает развивать программы подготовки руководителей школ с акцентом на поддерживающие и трансформационные практики.

Ключевые слова: стили лидерства директоров школ, удовлетворенность
работой учителей, директора школ, смешанные методы, Казахстан,
образовательное лидерство

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I was fortunate to begin my professional career at the school where success was largely defined by student academic achievements. This perspective strongly influenced my early understanding of educational effectiveness. When I began my career as a novice teacher, I was enthusiastic and filled with ideas, convinced that the curriculum and policies would shape the school's success. Over time, I came to the conclusion that it was the leadership style that defined the school's atmosphere and direction. Our school principal used to maintain a highly autocratic style, whereby decisions were top-down, teachers' inputs were rarely appreciated, and, hence, teacher collaboration was minimal. While students performed well on paper, the teachers' morale was visibly low. It became clear to me that school success cannot be sustainably achieved without fostering teachers' job satisfaction and motivation, which are inextricably tied to school leadership style (Eryilmaz et al., 2025). Throughout 22 years of my teaching experience, I witnessed various evidence of the link between the school administration's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction and overall school success. Leadership has played a crucial role in Kazakhstan's quickly changing educational context, as schools are being held to higher standards of accountability, creativity, and diversity (Nurmukhanova, 2020). The importance of leadership in creating a collaborative, supportive, and performance-driven atmosphere is even more important as schools deal with the increasing expectations for high-quality education, transparency, and innovation (Yakavets, 2015).

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 framework identifies school leadership as one of the nine major themes, acknowledging its effects on various aspects of the teaching and learning setting, including school climate, teacher job satisfaction, and professional development. The survey in Kazakhstan involved

6,566 teachers of lower secondary schools and 331 school principals, showing evidence that leadership is nearly tied with teacher autonomy, cooperation, and learning opportunities (TALIS, 2018). Principals, thus, according to the TALIS evidence, instantiate innovation, equity, and diversity in schools, independent priorities in contemporary education. Since principals directly affect working conditions, the professional growth, and motivation of teachers, their style of leadership becomes a vital variable for meeting these increased expectations on quality, transparency, and innovation in Kazakhstan's education system. Therefore, systematic studies on principals' leadership styles should be conducted to inform policymakers, promote school improvement, and sustain the engagement and retention of teachers (TALIS, 2018).

Moreover, research indicates that several crucial factors can contribute to teachers' job satisfaction, including workload, relationships among peers, autonomy, administrative support, and professional development opportunities (Kumar, 2024). In Kazakhstan, teachers' job dissatisfaction has been linked with inadequate professional development, poor autonomy, excessive administrative responsibilities, and inflexible organizational structure (OECD, 2014; Sarmurzin et al., 2022). According to the research, low teacher job satisfaction has been linked with higher turnover, poor instructional quality, and poor student achievement (Ingersoll, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Principals could impact many of these conditions directly through their leadership style to create a culture of collaboration within the school community, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and recognize the importance of teacher development (Leithwood et al., 2020). Considering the evolving educational reforms in Kazakhstan, which place ever-increasing demands on teachers in innovation, accountability, and curriculum change, an investigation into principals' leadership practices becomes paramount for

identifying how to improve teachers' job satisfaction, retain qualified teachers, and support ongoing efforts for school improvement.

School principals play a central role in either mitigating or exacerbating these stressors. According to Aydın et al. (2013), leadership styles are primarily responsible for organizational commitment and job satisfaction of the teachers. Complementing their findings, Nguni et al. (2006) found that transformational leadership indeed enhances the organizational climate and makes teachers more willing to stand and work in the profession. These findings align well with the research conducted in Kazakhstan's higher education: a study of public universities identified that transformational and transactional leadership styles positively influence teachers' job satisfaction, whereas laissez-faire leadership had adverse effects (Orynbeke et al., 2021).

Despite these insights, there is a lack of region-specific studies that examine how these leadership models function in different types of Kazakhstani schools, especially in selective versus comprehensive ones. This gap presents a crucial opportunity to explore the contextual interplay between leadership style and job satisfaction within a post-Soviet, transitional education system.

1.1.Education Context

The national educational system of Kazakhstan consists of preschool, primary, basic (lower) secondary, and upper (general or vocational) secondary education. Generally, there are 7833 (by 2023-2024 academic year) public or mainstream schools in Kazakhstan (www.stat.gov.kz). Preschool, elementary, and secondary education are considered compulsory and free of charge under the Constitution and the Education Law (MESRK, 2012). The fact that a comprehensive school integrates all levels

(primary, secondary, and upper general) could pose a potential challenge for any principal, since each level has unique peculiarities.

Starting from the late 2000s, the Kazakhstan education system has undergone several major, system-wide reforms, including the 12-year schooling pathway, the Updated Content of Education (Updated Curriculum), Trilingual education policy, and the establishment of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) network as a testing ground for pedagogy and capacity building (Yakavets, 2014; OECD, 2015). The reforms, enforced under a highly centralized government, had raised principal expectations, they are to lead to instructional change whilst maintaining firm compliance with state regulation. Demographics further work against them as urban schools run in double or even triple shifts due to overcrowding issues, wherein rural schools suffer from decreasing enrolments and a lack of teachers (OECD, 2019). However, amid these challenges, a school principal appointment mechanism is largely premised on the seniority principle, thus giving little room for any leadership-oriented appointment mechanisms in Kazakhstan (OECD, 2015; Sarmurzin et al., 2022). According to some estimates, about 75% of school principals do not have any pre-service leadership training, and professional development remains sporadic, generic, and at best marginally relevant to the complex demands of strategic, instructional, and distributed leadership (OECD, 2019; Sarmurzin et al., 2022). Most principals report “learning the job” and tend to put administrative compliance above collaborative, innovative, and motivating behaviour for teachers (Portin et al., 2003)

The issue of preparing a personnel reserve of education organization leaders was first raised by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in March 2023 during the opening of the first session of the Parliament of the VIII convocation (www.bilim.expert). The Head of State set a strategic goal to improve the quality of human capital through the modernization of management in the education

system and instructed that a personnel reserve of education organization leaders be prepared in the shortest possible time. The task of preparing change leaders is also reflected in the Concept for the Development of Preschool, Secondary, Technical, and Vocational Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029 as a target indicator for creating a personnel reserve of school leaders and change agents in education. Thus, in 2023, the Project for Training 1000 Change Leaders in Education was launched (www.bilim.expert). Selection and training of leaders are conducted in five stages: testing (applicants are selected for competency assessment testing according to the criteria), training (professional development program “Personnel Reserve of School Leaders: Potential and Development Strategies”, aimed at forming a new generation of education leaders.

Over two years, 583 candidates who successfully passed all stages of selection have entered the national personnel reserve. Many regions are effectively leveraging the personnel reserve by appointing trained specialists to key management positions. In addition to forming the reserve, about 4,000 current principals have already completed short-term professional development courses at the National Center for Professional Development “Orleu,” which has helped strengthen managerial capacity in schools and improve the quality of management in the education system (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). Furthermore, the “1000 Leaders of Change in Education” project was launched by the government of Kazakhstan in 2023 to compensate for these systemic shortcomings with a national reserve of school leaders prepared through a multi-stage programme, but there is very little empirical evidence remaining on how leadership style affects teacher job satisfaction in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

While research regarding principals’ leadership and job satisfaction has been increasing worldwide, the Kazakhstani context remains largely underdeveloped

(Nurmukhanova, 2020). Much of the educational leadership literature is grounded in the Western context, where the cultural, structural, and policy environments are vastly different from those of post-Soviet countries, and so far, only a handful of empirical studies have been conducted on the leadership-satisfaction interface in Central Asia (Silova, 2011; Yakavets, 2014). Such an unbalanced distribution has led to a research gap on the way principals' leadership styles can affect teachers' job satisfaction in schools in Kazakhstan, which includes selective schools, as well as a large network of comprehensive schools (OECD, 2015).

Thus, this study aims to address the lack of localized evidence on school leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in selective and comprehensive schools in West Kazakhstan. The research investigates how leadership styles differ between these institutions and how such differences can influence teachers' job satisfaction. Understanding these dynamics is essential for improving school leadership, informing policy, and ultimately enhancing educational quality.

1.2. Research Problem

This research explores the impact of school principals' leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction in four different schools, including comprehensive and selective schools, located in West Kazakhstan region. By investigating leadership in diverse school settings, the study aims to determine how principals' leadership behaviors may impact teachers' job satisfaction, including their morale, motivation, and professional engagement in different institutional settings.

The demands of ongoing educational reforms, high administrative workloads, limited professional autonomy, and few opportunities for ongoing professional development all influence Kazakhstan's teacher job satisfaction, which is considered a

complex and multifaceted issue (OECD, 2014; Sarmurzin et al, 2022). It is further worsened by the limited access to pre-service and in-service leadership training (OECD, 2015; Sarmurzin et al., 2022). As a result, school principals in Kazakhstan face significant pressure, with leadership practices ranging widely from transformational to autocratic styles (Durrani et al., 2024).

School principals, as key figures in instructional leadership, play a vital role in creating the professional conditions that influence teachers' experiences (He et al., 2024). Given the potential of leadership to mitigate or exacerbate workplace challenges (Aslan et al., 2025), there is a pressing need to examine how principals' leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction across different school types in Kazakhstan, which is an area that remains underexplored in the empirical literature. As such, there is a lack of empirical research on the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction across different types of schools in Kazakhstan. For example, little is known about whether school principals' leadership style in selective schools differs from that of their counterparts in comprehensive schools, and how these approaches can impact teachers' overall job satisfaction. Thereby, the study outcomes can inform policy and practice, including the development of targeted leadership training programs, school improvement efforts, and the design of effective strategies for teacher retention in schools in Kazakhstan.

1.3. Research Aim and Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction to generate insights that can inform leadership development and improve the work environment in schools in West Kazakhstan. The study uses a mixed methods approach to gain both a broad statistical

overview and a rich qualitative understanding of teacher experiences. The research aim is to explore teachers' perceptions of how leadership practices influence their job satisfaction. This study employs a convergent parallel mixed methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then integrated to form a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative strand involves teacher surveys that measure leadership styles, job satisfaction levels, and differences across demographic variables such as subject taught, years of experience, educational degree, and school type. The qualitative strand consists of individual interviews with principals and teachers. The two datasets will be merged during the interpretation phase, allowing for the comparison of statistical trends with participants' narratives. This integration can provide both breadth (from the large-scale survey data) and depth (from rich, contextualized qualitative accounts), enabling the study to capture the complexity of leadership dynamics and teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan's schools. To address the research problem and achieve the study's purpose, the following research questions will guide this study:

RQ 1: What kind of leadership styles are usually practiced by school principals in different schools?

RQ 2: What are the primary job satisfaction orientations of teachers in different schools?

RQ 3: Is there a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction among teachers based on their sex, subject, teaching experience, highest educational degree, and school type?

RQ 4: How do the leadership styles practiced by school principals (RQ1) relate to teachers' job satisfaction orientations (RQ2), and in what ways do teachers'

perspectives help explain the statistical differences observed across demographic groups (RQ3)?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, it addresses a gap in empirical literature concerning educational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction in Kazakhstan. While international research has emphasized the pivotal role of leadership in enhancing school performance and retaining teachers (Bush & Glover, 2014), there is a limited number of studies on school leadership styles in schools in Kazakhstan. Second, the study introduces a valuable comparative perspective by examining both comprehensive and selective schools, an area that has received little attention. Third, the study's outcomes have the potential to inform policy and practices in key areas such as teacher well-being, leadership preparation, and the practical implementation of educational reforms. As Kazakhstan continues to align its education system with global standards, insights into how leadership influences teacher satisfaction will be critical for cultivating a committed and resilient teaching workforce. Finally, this research is personally meaningful. As a practicing teacher, I have witnessed the significant impact that school leadership can have on the professional environment, teacher morale, and collaborative culture. Thus, the study outcomes can offer scholarly insight for improving leadership practices and teachers' job satisfaction in Kazakhstan's evolving school system.

1.5. Thesis overview

The thesis consists of six distinct chapters. The first chapter of this study presents the research background which includes Kazakhstan's educational system

description and the study's research problem statement, together with its research objectives, research questions, and study importance. The second chapter examines existing research through a detailed literature review, which studies how school principals lead their teams and their effect on teacher job satisfaction, while identifying important theoretical frameworks, research results, and current knowledge gaps. The research methodology section of Chapter 3 explains all aspects of the study, including its fundamental philosophical beliefs, research framework, participant selection process, and methods for collecting data and techniques for analyzing data. The study findings in Chapter 4 show the connection between leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction through both quantitative data and qualitative data. Chapter 5 presents the findings in relation to the research questions together with existing literature for the purpose of interpreting results while conducting a critical analysis. The thesis concludes in Chapter 6 through a summary of main findings which include theoretical and practical implications together with an evaluation of study limitations and recommendations for upcoming research and educational practice.

1.6.Chapter Summary

The chapter presents the research through its educational framework, which covers Kazakhstan as a whole while demonstrating how school principals determine teacher job satisfaction through their leadership approaches. The chapter used personal work experience together with empirical research evidence to demonstrate that leadership functions as a fundamental factor that influences school climate, teacher motivation, and educational success. The discussion outlined the ongoing educational reforms in Kazakhstan and the increasing demands placed on school leaders, thereby emphasizing the relevance and timeliness of the research topic. The research problem

extended its definition through the chapter, which discovered an important research gap about how different principals' leadership styles affect teacher job satisfaction in various schools throughout Kazakhstan. The study established its main objectives through research questions, which described principals' leadership practices and their impact on teacher job satisfaction through a mixed-methods research design. The study established its importance through its potential to create beneficial effects on educational policies and practices while contributing to the academic field of educational leadership research. The chapter established the thesis structure through a description of subsequent chapters, which helps solve the research problem.

The research context, problem statement, study purpose, and research questions of the study are connected through this chapter, which establishes a logical framework for the research. The next section of the study develops a theoretical framework through a literature review that analyzes school principals' leadership styles and their impact on teachers' job satisfaction.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In Chapter 1, I introduced the research problem, provided the background and context of the study, emphasized the importance of examining school leadership and teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan, and outlined the overarching aim and guiding research questions. Building on this foundation, Chapter 2 reviews theoretical and empirical literature on principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction, drawing on both international and Kazakhstani evidence. This chapter positions leadership approaches along a continuum that ranges from hierarchical and control-oriented models to collaborative and empowering forms, highlighting how different styles influence teachers' job satisfaction. By synthesizing key frameworks and findings, the review identifies a significant gap in comparative studies between comprehensive and selective schools. Given the clear connections between leadership practices and teacher satisfaction, the next chapter examines leadership styles in detail, moving from authoritarian to transformational approaches, and considers their potential implications for teachers' experiences in the Kazakhstani context.

This chapter consists of several sub-sections, beginning with an examination of teachers' job satisfaction orientations, followed by a discussion of principal leadership styles along a continuum from authoritarian to democratic and transformational approaches. Each sub-section highlights how different leadership practices of principals influence teachers' motivation, collaboration, and overall well-being, thereby situating the study within the broader scholarly discourse.

2.1. Teachers' Job Satisfaction Orientations

Teacher job satisfaction is a cornerstone of educational effectiveness and long-term system sustainability: it shapes teacher retention and performance, influences student learning, and helps define the overall school climate (Eryilmaz et al., 2025). Scholars generally regard it as a complex, multidimensional construct that draws on both intrinsic and extrinsic sources (Bogler, 2001). At its core, teachers' job satisfaction can be understood as their overall appraisal of the profession and the conditions under which they work, an appraisal that contributes to teacher effectiveness and organizational learning (Josanov-Vrgovic & Pavlovic, 2014). This appraisal is shaped not only by external conditions, but also by intrinsic elements that are embedded in the teaching role itself, purpose and meaning, professional autonomy, opportunities for growth and advancement, and the capacity to make a positive difference in students' lives, thereby nurturing internal fulfillment and motivation (Omar et al., 2022). Extrinsic elements arise from the broader work context, including salary, job security, workload, administrative rules and procedures, physical working conditions, and, crucially, leadership support (Abdallah et al., 2023). When teachers perceive inadequate support, their motivation to give their best in the classroom can diminish; conversely, principals can bolster satisfaction through targeted leadership practices, beginning with a thorough understanding of teachers' needs, which is fundamental to effective leadership (Olsen & Huang, 2018).

Jošanov-Vrgović and Pavlović (2014) conceptualize job satisfaction as an attitude toward work comprising three interrelated dimensions, cognitive, affective, and behavioural, that operate dynamically rather than in isolation. The cognitive dimension reflects teachers' beliefs and evaluative judgments about their roles, task clarity, fairness of procedures, and the adequacy of resources in the professional environment.

The affective dimension captures emotional responses to that environment, enthusiasm, pride, frustration, or fatigue, that rise and fall with daily experiences of support, recognition, and workload. The behavioural dimension concerns how beliefs and emotions translate into action: classroom engagement, discretionary effort, collaboration with colleagues, and intentions to remain in or exit the profession. Thus, teachers' job satisfaction reflects a dynamic interplay of beliefs, emotions, and actions that collectively shape their professional engagement and effectiveness. Yet, despite this significance, little is known about how different leadership styles foster or hinder these dimensions across varying school contexts.

A substantial body of research links these dimensions to the quality of leadership and broader organizational conditions (Kauppila, 2025; Kaya, 2024; Mosadeghrad, 2014). School leaders influence the cognitive dimension by clarifying goals, aligning expectations, ensuring transparent processes, and providing access to resources; they affect the affective dimension by fostering trust, psychological safety, and a sense of professional respect; and they shape the behavioural dimension by creating opportunities for collaboration, career growth, and teacher voice in decisions (Setialaksana, 2023). Supportive and participatory leadership, most notably transformational and distributed approaches, has been consistently associated with higher teacher satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Daily, 2018; Hariri et al., 2016; Somech, 2005). By contrast, overly bureaucratic environments, limited autonomy, weak communication, and unclear expectations are reliably linked to dissatisfaction and burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Concretely, a growing body of research highlights specific leadership practices that strengthen the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of teacher job satisfaction. Regular and constructive instructional feedback has been shown to improve teachers' instructional confidence, job satisfaction, and retention (Arcilla, 2025).

Similarly, fair and developmental appraisal systems contribute positively to teachers' perceptions of professional growth, with those who view evaluations as formative and supportive reporting greater satisfaction (Ford, 2018). Opportunities for shared decision-making not only enhance teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment but also foster higher levels of commitment and satisfaction despite added responsibilities (Cheng & Chan, 2000). Equally important is the recognition of professional contributions, which is consistently linked to improved morale, emotional well-being, and pro-social work behaviors (Brun & Dugas, 2008). Finally, when school leaders protect time for collaboration, they support collegial trust, shared learning, and professional community, thereby reinforcing teachers' motivation and sustained engagement (Lieberman & Miller, 2011). Together, these practices provide concrete mechanisms through which principals can shape the conditions of teachers' work in ways that bolster job satisfaction and organizational learning.

In the Kazakhstani context, studies indicate that administrative burden, constrained material and human resources, and the rapid pace of ongoing reforms can depress teacher satisfaction, particularly when new requirements are introduced without commensurate support (Nurmukhanova, 2020; Ratova et al., 2024; Sarmurzin et al., 2022). At the same time, teachers frequently report that leadership support, meaningful professional development opportunities, and the alignment of school policies with professional values which may include fairness, instructional quality, and student well-being) are powerful enhancers of satisfaction ((Eryilmaz et al., 2025)).

These findings are especially salient in West Kazakhstan, where urban-rural disparities and varying access to professional learning make the principal's day-to-day leadership practices highly consequential (OECD, 2019). In such settings, principals who reduce unnecessary administrative load, communicate clearly about reforms, involve teachers in planning, and recognize accomplishments can strengthen teachers'

cognitive evaluations, including perceived fairness and efficacy, elevate positive affect, including enthusiasm and collegial trust, and encourage constructive behaviours, such as collaboration and staying in post ((Eryilmaz et al., 2025). Guided by this literature, the present research explores how principals' leadership styles in West Kazakhstan influence the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of teachers' job satisfaction.

By linking specific leadership behaviors, such as instructional feedback, shared decision-making, recognition practices to particular satisfaction outcomes and teachers' intentions to stay in the profession, the study aims to identify the leadership strategies most likely to maintain an engaged, effective, and stable teaching workforce in the regional context. Teachers' job satisfaction does not exist in isolation, and it is strongly influenced by how principals lead their schools. The leadership style principals adopt sets the tone for the school climate, either strengthening or weakening teachers' thoughts, emotions, and actions. In this way, job satisfaction reflects how teachers experience their work, while leadership styles act as a key driver that shapes those experiences, linking the two in a clear and important.

2.2. School Principal Leadership Styles

In this study, *leadership* is understood as a process of social influence through which principals mobilize staff to pursue shared educational goals (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2012). In school contexts, this entails organizing daily operations, cultivating a positive learning climate, and motivating teachers to improve teaching and learning (Nawaz & Khan, 2016; Pardosi & Utari, 2022). Effective leadership combines strategic decision-making, strong interpersonal competence, and the capacity to inspire, with demonstrated effects on teacher morale and student outcomes (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Within Kazakhstan, leadership practice has been evolving from highly centralized, command-oriented models toward more participatory and reform-aligned approaches, though the pace and depth of this shift vary by region and school type (Nurmukhanova, 2020). Positioning the present research in West Kazakhstan, I analyze how principals' behaviours map onto a continuum of leadership styles, from more directive, control-based models to more collaborative and empowering forms, and how these styles are associated with teachers' job satisfaction. This continuum provides the organizing framework for the sections that follow and anchors the study's measurement strategy and hypotheses regarding satisfaction-related outcomes.

The following subsections outline the main leadership styles discussed in the literature: authoritarian, transactional, distributed, transformational, and task-oriented, highlighting their defining characteristics and the implications each holds for teachers' job satisfaction.

2.2.1. Authoritarian and Closed Leadership Style

In this study, authoritarian or autocratic leadership is taken to mean a pattern of centralized authority, strict control, and minimal participation by teachers: principals make decisions unilaterally and expect compliance, thereby suppressing teacher input and autonomy (Zhang & Xie, 2017). In post-Soviet education systems, including Kazakhstan, such hierarchical arrangements and limited teacher agency have historically been common, making this style a relevant reference point for Kazakhstan (Zhang & Xie, 2017). Closely related is closed leadership, which amplifies the restrictive features of authoritarian practice through inflexibility, secrecy, control-oriented behavior, and one-way decision-making; schools led in this way typically exhibit weak collaboration and limited open communication (Shamatov, 2023).

For teachers, these leadership conditions are frequently associated with disengagement, mistrust, and lower job satisfaction, and can trigger defensive or passive responses when autonomy is curtailed (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). By contrast, transformational leadership is believed to foster collaboration, empowerment, and shared vision, mechanisms known to boost motivation and satisfaction (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transactional leadership also assumes a hierarchy but operates through a clearer exchange of rewards and sanctions, distinguishing it from the unilateral control typical of authoritarianism (Nguni et al., 2006).

Empirical studies have frequently conceptualized authoritarian or closed leadership through teacher-reported features such as unilateral decision-making, restricted opportunities for voice in governance, intensive monitoring, and low transparency. Research consistently demonstrates that these characteristics are negatively associated with teacher job satisfaction, undermining recognition, autonomy, and working conditions. For instance, Delay et al. (2020) found that autocratic leadership styles were linked to higher stress and lower satisfaction among teachers compared to transformational and ethical leadership. Similarly, Kaya (2024) highlighted that collaborative and empowering leadership models, such as transformational leadership, enhance teacher autonomy, recognition, and professional engagement, providing a clear contrast to the restrictive nature of authoritarian approaches. Collectively, these findings emphasize the detrimental effects of directive leadership patterns on teacher well-being and underscore the value of more participatory leadership practices.

2.2.2. Transactional Leadership Style

In this study, transactional leadership is treated as a task-oriented, exchange-based approach that emphasizes clarity, consistency, and control, while centering on the contingent relationship between leaders and followers: performance that meets agreed

standards is recognized or rewarded (McCleskey, 2014). Pragmatic and results-driven, transactional leadership can be effective for maintaining stability and operational efficiency in structured school environments (Grint, 2005). Two components are central to transactional leadership. First, contingent reward: principals set explicit expectations and provide incentives, formal or informal, when those expectations are met (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Second, management by exception: leaders either monitor and correct deviations proactively (active) or intervene only after problems emerge (passive) (Bass & Avolio, 1994; McCleskey, 2014).

In relation to job satisfaction, transactional leadership can offer procedural clarity and strengthen perceptions of fairness; meta-analytic evidence shows a positive, but generally weaker, association with satisfaction compared with transformational leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Its limits stem from its reliance on extrinsic motivation, which may not cultivate intrinsic commitment or emotional investment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Nazim & Mahmood, 2018). Overreliance on management by exception, especially in a corrective or punitive form, can erode morale and trust, encouraging compliance rather than professional growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

In Kazakhstani contexts where structure and accountability are highly valued, transactional routines, clear expectations, consistent evaluation, and fair rewards, can contribute to a predictable, stable work environment and support certain satisfaction facets, such as supervision/recognition, perceptions of fairness, when balanced with more transformational practices that build autonomy, collaboration, and shared purpose (Dai et al., 2013).

2.2.3.Distributed Leadership Style

In this study, distributed or collaborative leadership is understood as the shared enactment of leadership work across multiple members of the school community, rather than its concentration in the principal alone (Spillane, 2005). Unlike transformational leadership, which often centers influence in a single figure, distributed leadership decentralizes authority, emphasizing collective ownership and shared accountability for improvement; and unlike transactional leadership, it prioritizes collaboration and professional expertise over structured exchanges of rewards and sanctions.

In schools, distributed leadership is expressed through collaborative decision-making, collective responsibility, and reciprocal influence among teachers, middle leaders, principals, and other stakeholders in pursuit of common goals (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2013). Roles and tasks are allocated by expertise rather than formal title, creating a dynamic environment in which teachers lead initiatives, engage in problem-solving teams, and co-design curriculum and assessment (Torres, 2018). The principal's role shifts from sole decision-maker to architect of conditions, building trust, facilitating open communication, and ensuring inclusive structures, such as professional learning communities, subject-methodical associations, peer observation cycles that sustain teacher leadership.

In Kazakhstan, with its mix of urban schools and rural schools with small class sizes, distributed leadership emerges as an effective, context-sensitive approach to bolstering school capacity, enhancing teacher voice, and stabilizing school climates during ongoing reforms. This is exemplified in the Teacher Leadership in Kazakhstan (TLK) initiative, studied by Qanay et al. (2021), who found through a mixed-methods study that positive experiences with the program and a collaborative school culture were strongly associated with increased teacher leadership capacity and greater impact of teacher-led projects, key indicators of improved school culture and effectiveness.

A consistent body of research links distributed leadership to higher teacher morale, engagement, and satisfaction, particularly when teachers perceive that their voices matter and leadership responsibilities are genuinely shared (Hartley, 2010; Somech, 2005; Torres, 2018). In line with this study's framework, research underscores that distributed leadership is positively associated with global job satisfaction and its specific facets, such as autonomy, recognition, advancement, and supervision/feedback, and further predicts stronger intentions to remain in the profession (Li et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023; Samancıoğlu et al., 2020), which can include indicators such as teacher-reported indicators of participation in decision-making, non-positional leadership roles, team-based improvement activities, and inclusive communication norms.

2.2.4. Transformational and Open Leadership Style

For this study, transformational leadership is understood as an approach that inspires and empowers teachers to pursue shared educational purposes, rather than relying primarily on compliance or exchange-based control (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). In contrast to transactional routines that hinge on rewards and performance monitoring, transformational leadership elevates motivation, commitment, and ethical conduct through vision, modeling, and individualized support; evidence links this style to stronger organizational performance, innovation, and proactive engagement (Abbas & Ali, 2021; Jung, 2001).

Following Bass's foundational work, Bass and Avolio (1994) specify four core dimensions ("the four I's"), which include (a) idealized influence, principals act as ethical role models, building trust and credibility; (b) inspirational motivation, they articulate a compelling, optimistic vision that unifies and energizes the school community; (c) intellectual stimulation, they encourage critical inquiry, challenge assumptions, and support collaborative problem-solving; (d) individualized

consideration, they recognize teachers' distinct professional needs, offering mentoring and tailored support to promote growth and well-being (see also Bakker et al., 2022; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Closely aligned is open leadership (Shamatov, 2023), which emphasizes honesty, transparency, collegiality, and supportiveness. Open leadership, whether transformational or distributed, operationalizes a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared decision-making, enabling teachers to feel respected, valued, and empowered. Transformational leadership promotes collective involvement and confidence in teachers (Heenan, 2023; Kareem et al., 2023), while distributed leadership fosters empowerment and mutual trust through dispersed authority (TeachersNotes, 2025).

The literature consistently associates transformational (or “open”) leadership with higher levels of teacher job satisfaction, supported by empirical findings showing its positive effects on professional resilience, school culture, and staff well-being (Kaya, 2024; Heenan, 2023). Practices such as communicating a shared vision, motivating through purposeful dialogue, providing constructive feedback, and prioritizing professional development strengthen school culture and teachers' sense of meaning and efficacy (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Jung, 2001). Teachers led by transformational principals report greater motivation, clearer purpose, and higher satisfaction and organizational commitment (Bogler, 2001; Hariri et al., 2016; Nazim & Mahmood, 2018). Meta-analytic and large-scale reviews show that transformational leadership relates more strongly to satisfaction than transactional leadership, in part via improved climate and reduced burnout (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

2.2.5. Democratic Leadership Style

In this study, democratic leadership denotes an inclusive, participatory approach that aligns closely with transformational principles while foregrounding shared

decision-making, open communication, and teacher voice. Unlike authoritarian or narrowly task-oriented models, school principals who exercise democratic leadership actively solicit teachers' input, respond to professional needs, and cultivate a culture of mutual respect and collective responsibility (Ch et al., 2017). Empirical work links this style to higher teacher job satisfaction, largely through increased autonomy, empowerment, and opportunities for professional growth (Ch et al., 2017; Daily, 2018). These features mirror core transformational tenets, trust building, motivation, and individualized development- while emphasizing day-to-day participation and procedural fairness. Daily (2018) further notes that democratic leaders tend to be supportive, authentic, and approachable, reinforcing a positive, collaborative climate.

Positioned on the study's leadership continuum, democratic leadership, centered on shared decision-making, transparent processes, and collaborative engagement, bridges structured, transactional practices and fully transformational approaches. This style fosters school climates of trust, respect, and professional agency, leading teachers to feel more empowered and valued (Uy et al., 2024).

In Kazakhstan, democratic leadership offers practical mechanisms to elevate teacher satisfaction across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral facets of professional life. By fostering clarity of expectations and a sense of fairness, it strengthens the cognitive dimension, by building trust and enthusiasm, it enriches the affective dimension; and by encouraging collaboration and supporting teachers' willingness to stay, it reinforces the behavioral dimension. Evidence from Sarmurzin (2024) highlights that when school leaders actively support teachers through transparent processes, recognition, and professional growth opportunities, they significantly enhance teachers' perceived status and workplace satisfaction, suggesting that democratic approaches can serve as an effective response to the challenges of Kazakhstan's reform-driven educational context. Concretely, principals can institutionalize teacher participation

(e.g., representative committees, co-design of PD), two-way feedback, and transparent decision rules. In our analysis, we will operationalize democratic leadership through teacher reports of shared decision-making, open communication, and responsiveness to needs, and test predicted positive associations with facet-level satisfaction, especially autonomy, recognition/supervision, and advancement, as well as with intentions to remain.

2.2.6.Task-Oriented Leadership Style

In this study, task-oriented leadership refers to a goal- and process-focused approach that prioritizes efficiency, structure, and task completion over relational considerations (Stogdill, 1963). Although less overtly authoritarian, it shares an emphasis on control, order, and compliance with procedures, often placing organizational targets above collaboration and teacher well-being. In school settings, such emphasis has been associated with lower teacher satisfaction, particularly around communication quality, collegiality, and overall climate (Somech, 2005).

Conceptually, task-oriented leadership closely parallels transactional leadership: both rely on structured, performance-based management, such as clear standards, monitoring, and corrective action (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yukl, 2013). While this can clarify roles, expectations, and accountability, it typically lacks the motivational and inspirational elements needed to sustain deep engagement and long-term job satisfaction (Somech, 2005). As Yukl (2013) notes, styles that lean heavily on extrinsic motivation, through rewards and consequences, risk overlooking intrinsic drivers (autonomy, purpose, professional growth) and the emotional connections more effectively cultivated by transformational practices. In Kazakhstani contexts that value structure and accountability, such as small-class rural schools or schools navigating active reforms, task-oriented routines may bring short-term clarity and stability. However, without complementary strategies that build teacher voice, recognition, and developmental

feedback, they may dampen satisfaction in facets like collegial relations, autonomy, and perceived fairness.

2.3.Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the theoretical and empirical literature on teachers' job satisfaction and principal leadership styles, situating the discussion within both international and Kazakhstani contexts. Teacher job satisfaction was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral facets, shaped by intrinsic motivators such as purpose and autonomy as well as extrinsic conditions like workload, recognition, and leadership support. A substantial body of evidence indicates that principals, through their leadership practices, play a central role in shaping these dimensions by clarifying expectations, fostering trust, and providing opportunities for collaboration and professional growth.

The review positioned leadership styles along a continuum, ranging from authoritarian and closed approaches that suppress teacher agency to democratic and transformational styles that cultivate trust, empowerment, and shared purpose. Transactional and task-oriented models were highlighted as occupying an intermediate space: capable of providing clarity and stability but limited in their ability to nurture intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement. In Kazakhstan, where educational reforms and resource constraints present ongoing challenges, leadership practices that balance structure with inclusion and teacher voice appear especially consequential for sustaining teacher satisfaction and retention. Notably, the literature points to a lack of comparative evidence across different school types, such as comprehensive and selective schools, which this study seeks to address.

Building on these insights, the next chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the relationships between leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in West Kazakhstan. It details the research design, sampling strategy, instruments, and analytic procedures employed to operationalize leadership styles, authoritarian, transactional, distributed, transformational, democratic, and task-oriented, and to examine their associations with distinct facets of teacher satisfaction. By integrating established theoretical frameworks with contextual realities, the methodology chapter provides the foundation for a systematic exploration of how principals' leadership shapes the professional experiences of teachers.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter defines the methodological framework employed in the study to explore the influence of the principal's leadership style on teachers' job satisfaction across various types of schools in Kazakhstan. The chapter elaborates on the choice of the research design, philosophy, site, and participants. It also provides a detailed description of the data collection instruments, procedures, and data analysis, as well as ethical issues. Since leadership and job satisfaction are complex and multifactorial concepts, the chapter justifies why both methodologies are used simultaneously, namely to study causal, measurable relationships, contrasting with the exploration of more subtle perspectives, which I explain in detail below.

3.1. Philosophical Underpinnings

The study is based on a pragmatic research paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), highlighting practical problem-solving, methodological diversity, and employing strategies that best address the research questions. In this framework, the research design is influenced not by strict philosophical ideals but by practical usefulness, indicating that the chosen methods should effectively tackle the intricacies of the issue being explored (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

This study adopts a relativist ontological perspective, which views leadership and teacher job satisfaction not as fixed or objectively measurable realities, but as socially produced phenomena shaped by context, interactions, and perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Leadership is approached as a fluid process of influence and relationship-building rather than a permanent trait of individuals; its expression differs

across schools depending on institutional cultures and local conditions. Likewise, teacher job satisfaction is treated as a multi-faceted construct, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, that arises from educators lived experiences within their professional environments rather than from universal or context-free factors (Bogler, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

On the epistemological side, the study aligns with a pragmatist–interpretivist stance. From the pragmatist view, the aim is to generate knowledge that has practical value for improving school leadership and strengthening teachers’ job satisfaction in Kazakhstan (John W. Creswell & Vicki L. Plano Clark, 2018; Abbas Tashakkori & Charles Teddlie, 2010). From the interpretivist perspective, the focus is on understanding the meanings teachers and principals assign to leadership practices, and how these meanings influence their professional experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This dual orientation supports the use of mixed methods: quantitative surveys to identify associations and patterns between leadership styles and job satisfaction, and qualitative interviews to provide deeper insights into the contextual and subjective dimensions of those relationships. By bringing these approaches together, the study seeks to produce knowledge that is both empirically reliable and contextually sensitive, acknowledging the socially embedded nature of school leadership and teacher satisfaction.

3.2. Research Methods

This study employs a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, then analyzed independently, and finally integrated during interpretation to produce a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of school

leadership and teacher job satisfaction. This approach allows for the triangulation of survey findings with in-depth interview insights, enhancing both the credibility and richness of the results by drawing on the strengths of both methods.

To achieve the study's purpose and explore research questions in a detailed way, this study adopts both quantitative and qualitative research methods, as this approach is well-suited for investigating complex social phenomena and revealing participants' life experiences. As Creswell (2013) notes, *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). Likewise, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize that the main goal of qualitative research is to understand how individuals interpret their world and the experiences within it. Rather than predicting outcomes or establishing causal relationships, the study focuses on exploring the meaning, context, and perspectives of participants regarding leadership style and job satisfaction.

As the study entails the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction, *a quantitative method* is appropriate since it systematically measures the relationship and provides generalizable and statistically valid results. In morphological consideration, quantitative research fits into identifying patterns, hypothesizing, and establishing the strength and direction of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method enables the collection of data from a larger sample, which increases reliability and supports the broader applicability of the findings by using structured instruments such as surveys and standardized scales (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In educational leadership studies, quantitative methods have been widely used to examine how specific leadership styles, such as transformational or instructional leadership, correlate with teachers' levels of satisfaction, motivation, and retention (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi,

2005). Moreover, the presence of statistical analyses ensures that the relationship between dependent and independent variables is truly evidence-based and crucial while also eliminating the possibility of confounding variables being present, thereby strengthening the validity of conclusions (Bryman, 2016). The quantitative aspect of this study ensures that the impact of leadership on job satisfaction is measured and compared in a quantitative manner to increase the general validity of the findings.

3.3. Research Site

The study was carried out in a variety of schools, including comprehensive and selective schools, to obtain a thorough understanding of how principals' leadership styles affect teachers' job satisfaction in various educational settings. 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). A comprehensive school setting exemplifies the typical educational setting in Kazakhstan, providing perspectives on the overall application of leadership practices, while selective schools, such as specialized ones for gifted children and private ones, were selected for their innovative approaches, high academic expectations, and reform-oriented leadership models. Ultimately, selective schools are added to offer a different viewpoint, as they often operate with different governance structures, levels of autonomy, and accountability mechanisms in comparison to public schools.

3.4. Sampling Strategy

A stratified purposive sampling strategy was employed to capture meaningful variation across schools and teacher characteristics (Etikan, 2016). Purposive sampling is particularly suitable for educational research where the aim is to gain an in-depth

understanding of complex social phenomena rather than to generalize statistically (Patton, 2015). The use of stratification within purposive sampling further strengthens the design by ensuring that sub-groups of interest are adequately represented, thereby enhancing the credibility and transferability of findings (Cohen et al., 2018). In this way, the sampling strategy ensures that diverse voices are included, providing a nuanced and comprehensive picture of how leadership influences teacher job satisfaction across different school settings.

In order to ensure representation of diverse resource contexts, organizational structures, and leadership challenges, schools were selected based on their size (small, medium, and large) and location (urban and rural), reflecting a stratified purposive sampling approach (Etikan, 2016). Within each school, teachers were invited to complete a questionnaire survey, with the target of reaching approximately 70 – 100 participants across all sites. This number was chosen to allow for meaningful statistical analysis of variation across leadership styles and satisfaction dimensions while maintaining feasibility. From this larger pool, some teachers were purposefully selected for semi-structured interviews to ensure representation across subject specializations, years of teaching experience, and gender.

School principals were included as key informants, with one principal per participating school interviewed to capture leadership perspectives and triangulate teacher reports. Importantly, not all survey respondents were interviewed; rather, interviews were conducted with a strategically chosen sample of teachers and principals to provide contextual depth that complements the broader survey findings. This combined approach balances breadth and generalizability (through survey data) with depth and nuance (through interviews), thereby producing a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction.

Teacher participants were purposefully selected for interviews to represent a range of topic specializations, years of teaching experience, and genders. This approach allowed the research to balance breadth and depth, combining representativeness with rich, context-specific insights.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative tools were employed in this study to ensure robust and comprehensive data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Teachers' job satisfaction and principals' leadership styles were measured using a structured survey instrument for the quantitative strand, while in-depth interviews provided qualitative insights into teachers' and principals' lived experiences (see Appendix C and Appendix D).

The following sub-sections describe the data collection procedures in detail. First, the survey instrument is introduced, including its structure, sources, and reliability. Next, the interview protocols are outlined, explaining how participants were selected and how questions were designed to elicit rich, context-specific perspectives. Finally, the section addresses the piloting process and ethical considerations, ensuring the tools were valid, appropriate, and ethically sound for the Kazakhstani context.

3.5.1. Survey

The purpose of the survey instrument was to systematically investigate how teachers perceived the leadership styles of school principals and how they affected their job satisfaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure compliance with ethical research standards, including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time, the questionnaire begins with an informed consent item that asks participants to

indicate their voluntary agreement to participate in the study (Yes/No). Demographic data, including gender, age, subject area, teaching experience, and duration of employment with the current principal, are collected in the survey's first section. These factors were crucial for comprehending participants' backgrounds and facilitating cross-group comparisons.

The structured Likert-scale items that comprise the majority of the questionnaire are intended to capture teachers' opinions of leadership techniques and their levels of job satisfaction (Cohen et al., 2018). On a four-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," respondents are asked to indicate how much they agree. Items representing various leadership philosophies, such as centralized decision-making, the division of leadership responsibilities, teacher participation, motivational techniques, and professional development methods, are included in the leadership section. Recognition, equity, support, autonomy, teamwork, working conditions, and chances for career advancement are all highlighted in the section on job satisfaction. The survey included open-ended questions in addition to closed-ended ones that let respondents go into further detail about their experiences, such as elements that improve or worsen their job satisfaction, opinions of their principal's leadership style, and suggestions for improvement. These qualitative answers supplement the quantitative results and offer more profound contextual insights.

In general, a mixed methods approach is supported by the survey design, which permits the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. While the qualitative data enhances the interpretation of findings by capturing participants' lived experiences and viewpoints, the quantitative data makes statistical analysis of the relationships between leadership styles and job satisfaction easier (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The validity and depth of the study's conclusions are improved by this integration of data sources.

3.5.2. Interviews

Teachers and the principal participated in semi-structured interviews for the qualitative strand in order to gather detailed viewpoints and firsthand accounts of leadership behaviors and how they affect job satisfaction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview protocols combined open-ended thematic questions with flexibility for follow-up probing, ensuring both consistency and responsiveness to emergent themes (Bryman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The use of surveys and interviews together provided supportive insights: surveys produced evidence of links that were applied generally, and interviews offered rich, contextual narratives that enhanced the study's validity and breadth of findings.

Teachers and the principal participated in semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data after the survey (see Appendix B). Confidentiality and comfort were guaranteed by conducting the interviews in a private setting, either online or within the school, and with the participants' consent, the audio was recorded. The duration of each interview was roughly 25 to 30 minutes, which allowed for a thorough examination of topics like collaborative decision-making, professional support, and communication. Strict confidentiality procedures were followed at every stage, such as anonymizing transcripts and storing digital information in a secure location. Consistency, ethical integrity, and the gathering of both general and detailed insights into the connection between leadership practices and teacher job satisfaction were guaranteed by this methodical process (see Appendix E).

3.6. Data Analysis

This study uses a mixed methods approach to data analysis, separating and analyzing the quantitative and qualitative components before integrating them for interpretation. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were used to describe participant responses before quantitative data were processed using Jamovi. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the survey instruments' reliability and ensure internal consistency; values greater than 0.70 were deemed acceptable (Cronbach, 1951). Multiple regression analysis was used to determine which leadership attributes most strongly predict teacher job satisfaction after Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the correlations between leadership style and job satisfaction. ANOVA tests were also used to investigate demographic differences, including those between urban and rural schools (Field, 2018). Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to examine the data for the qualitative strand. Open coding, theme generation and refining, thematic category definition and naming, and transcript familiarization were all steps in this process. The accuracy of interpretations was verified through member-checking with selected participants, and MAXQDA software was utilized to streamline the coding process and enhance the reliability and consistency of the qualitative analysis.

The techniques were used to guarantee validity, dependability, and trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). Cronbach's alpha was utilized to verify internal consistency in the quantitative strand, and factor analysis was employed to bolster construct validity (Cronbach, 1951). In the qualitative strand, dependability was established through an audit trail of coding decisions; confirmability was improved through reflexive journaling to reduce researcher bias; transferability was reinforced through a detailed description of the research context; and credibility was reinforced

through member-checking and peer debriefing. In order to enhance interpretation and offer a more thorough grasp of how school leadership styles affect teachers' job satisfaction, the two strands were finally integrated through triangulation, which compared convergent and divergent data.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

To preserve participant confidence and rigor, the data gathering procedure was conducted in a rigorous and ethically supervised manner (Shenton, 2004). I contacted school administrations and invited principals and teachers to participate in the study after obtaining institutional ethical permission. Information sheets and consent papers in Kazakh, Russian, or English were given to participants so they could decide whether or not to participate (see Appendix A).

This study upheld strict ethical principles to safeguard the dignity, confidentiality, and well-being of all participants. Before data collection began, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) web-based training program (<https://about.citiprogram.org>) and obtained certification for conducting ethical research. Following this, I submitted an ethics application to the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee. The application outlined the study's aims, procedures, potential risks, and strategies for maintaining confidentiality. Following approval by NU IREC, data collection began. During recruitment, I provided a clear explanation of the study's purpose, methods, and ethical protections to ensure participants could make informed and voluntary choices about their involvement. Teachers were reminded that participation was completely voluntary, that they might withdraw at any stage without penalty, and that they were free to decline answering any questions.

The research followed KERA (Kazakhstan Education Research Association) ethical guidelines, which require researchers to treat participants with respect while allowing them to voluntarily participate and to make informed decisions about their participation while protecting their personal information and safeguarding their research data. In accordance with these guidelines, all participants were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and were assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, including the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage. Furthermore, the study adhered to principles of integrity and transparency throughout the research process, ensuring that findings were reported accurately and without bias (Sagintayeva et al., 2019).

Each participant received an informed consent form in Kazakh, Russian, or English, enabling them to select their preferred language (see Appendix E). They were asked to review and sign the form, and a copy was provided for their records. To preserve anonymity, the schools' names were deliberately omitted from all research materials. No personal identifiers were included in transcripts, reports, or publications; instead, pseudonyms were assigned and used consistently throughout the study. Confidentiality was safeguarded through secure data management practices: all digital files, including audio recordings, transcripts, and participant details, were stored in password-protected folders on my personal computer (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although the study was expected to involve minimal physical or psychological risk, some potential issues were anticipated. For instance, there might be a possibility that the principal could recognize participants and react to their responses, leading to workplace discomfort. To prevent this, strict confidentiality procedures were observed, and participants were assured that their identities remained fully protected and were not shared with the school administration.

3.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter laid out research methodology for exploring the impact of school principals' leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction in West Kazakhstan. A convergent parallel mixed methods design, grounded in pragmatism, was used to capture both breadth and depth of data. The chapter described the research site, participants, instruments, procedures, and analysis, alongside measures to ensure validity and ethical compliance. The next chapter presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter presents results from a mixed-methods study that explored the impact of principals' leadership style on teachers' job satisfaction in four different school contexts, including regional, private, rural, and urban schools in Western Kazakhstan. The quantitative strand assessed teachers' job satisfaction and perceptions of principal leadership style; it examined differences across school types and teacher characteristics, as well as relationships and predictive effects. The qualitative strand was based on semi-structured interviews with four school principals and eight teachers, who represented all four types of schools on their lived experiences of how school principals' leadership style influenced their motivation, well-being, and professional commitment.

This chapter includes (1) quantitative findings, (2) comparative and demographic analyses, (3) relationships between leadership and job satisfaction along with predictive analysis, and (4) qualitative findings. Quantitative results are presented first to highlight general patterns and relationships through descriptive statistics, group comparisons, correlation analyses, and regression models. Followed by qualitative findings to add depth to the statistical results and offer more context for interpretation through thematically analyzed interview data. I now explain each of them in detail.

4.1. Quantitative Findings

Data from all 81 participants were used to calculate descriptive statistics for each variable. Overall, teachers reported moderate job satisfaction ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.28$). Principals' leadership perceptions were generally positive along all five dimensions of

leadership. Mean scores ranged from 3.15 to 3.22 for instructional, transformational, distributed, and supportive leadership, while the overall leadership score was also 3.19 (SD = 0.41). With median values of 3.00 for all leadership dimensions, the results indicate that most responses were distributed around the central point of the scale. Marked descriptive differences were observed across school types. Teachers at private schools also consistently exhibited the highest levels of perceived leadership over all dimensions, and the highest job satisfaction (M = 3.12). Teachers in rural public schools, on the other hand, reported the lowest levels of both leadership perceptions and job satisfaction (M = 2.78). Public schools were intermediate in regional and urban contexts. The descriptive elements of the study provided a preliminary indication that the context of the school may affect the teachers' job satisfaction and leadership perceptions and hence led to their inferential study.

4.1.1. Comparative Analysis of Job Satisfaction Across School Types

Job satisfaction by school type was assessed using a one-way Welch's ANOVA. A justified decision to use Welch's ANOVA was made because it does not presume homogeneity of variances and is more suitable under an unequal variances scenario. The analysis found a significant difference in job satisfaction across school types, $F(3, 37.76) = 4.87, p = .006$. This indicates that the teachers' job satisfaction varied by the school context. Games-Howell post-hoc comparisons demonstrated that job satisfaction was significantly greater among teachers working in private schools than in rural public schools ($p = .008$) and urban public schools ($p = .011$). No significant differences were observed between regional schools and the other school types, nor between rural public schools and urban public schools. Interpretative results: At the group level, organizational context appears to be meaningfully associated with job satisfaction, with private schools demonstrating

comparatively more favorable outcomes. However, the presence of only partial differences across school types suggests that context alone is insufficient to explain variability in job satisfaction. Leadership behaviours may therefore play an important role in accounting for differences within similar organizational contexts.

4.1.2. Demographic and Professional Predictors of Job Satisfaction Differences

A t-test on independent samples using Welch's correction was undertaken to find differences in job satisfaction by gender. There was no significant difference between male and female teachers as a result of $t(14.94) = 0.92$, $p = .374$. The effect size was relatively small (Cohen's $d = 0.30$), indicating that gender had little impact on job satisfaction in this sample.

A one-way Welch's ANOVA was calculated to find a difference in job satisfaction for the four teaching experience categories (0–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, and more than 16 years). The results of the analysis showed a statistically significant effect of years of teaching experience, $F(3, 29.79) = 3.01$, $p = .046$. A post-hoc test using Games-Howell showed that teachers with 11–15 years of experience had significantly higher job satisfaction than teachers with 0–5 years of experience ($p = .044$). No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant in this study. Interpretive implication: Job satisfaction seems to increase from early career to mid career: job confidence/stability; skill acquisition; satisfaction is further boosted with career.

A one-way Welch's ANOVA was used to see if there were differences with age in job satisfaction among employees. The results showed a significant difference, $F(1, 65.27) = 8.90$, $p = .004$. Post-hoc interpretation determined that teachers in the middle age group had higher job satisfaction compared to younger teachers. Interpretive conclusion: The age effects are consistent with experience

findings and further support that satisfaction is related to professional maturity, stable identity, and adaptation to the demands of the job.

Differences in job satisfaction across teaching subjects were analyzed using Welch's ANOVA. There were no significant differences found between the subject groups, $F(7, 18.55) = 2.36$, $p = .066$, and post-hoc comparisons did not show significant pairwise differences between the subject groups. To validate the reliability of the results, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was performed as well. A statistically significant difference was indicated by the data across subjects $\chi^2(3) = 14.59$, $p = .002$. Implication: There might be subject differences, but they cannot be safely attributed to the subject area unless a more balanced sample is drawn across disciplines.

4.1.3. Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Pearson correlation analysis indicated robust, positive, and statistically significant associations of teachers' job satisfaction and all dimensions of measurement associated with leadership. Instructional leadership was found to be the most closely related to job satisfaction ($r = .742$, $p < .001$), followed by distributed leadership ($r = .729$, $p < .001$) and overall leadership ($r = .738$, $p < .001$). Significant positive associations were also found between job satisfaction and transformational leadership ($r = .681$, $p < .001$) and supportive leadership ($r = .636$, $p < .001$).

Moreover, very high intercorrelations were among the dimensions of leadership themselves (coefficients ranged from $r = .774$ to $r = .967$, $p < .001$), demonstrating high levels of both conceptual and empirical overlap between leadership styles. The strongest relationships were found between overall leadership and instructional leadership ($r = .967$) and between overall leadership

and distributed leadership ($r = .924$). These results indicate that teachers' perceptions of leadership are viewed as holistic rather than merely as discrete behavior, and in an effort to promote better practice, greater job satisfaction increases with good leadership, especially instructional and distributed leadership. The strength and consistency of these correlations suggest that leadership serves as the core variable associated with teachers' satisfaction at work and hence provides a strong empirical framework for subsequent regression analysis exploring the role of leadership in this phenomenon.

4.1.4. Leadership as a Predictor of Teachers' Job Satisfaction

To address Research Question 2, there were multiple linear regression analysis performed to determine the extent to which principals' leadership is predictive of teachers' job satisfaction while controlling for demographic and contextual factors. The dependent variable was job satisfaction. The predictors were: overall leadership (Leadership_total), age, years of teaching, gender, and type of school. Total regression model fit indicated a good fit, explaining much of the variance in teachers' job satisfaction. The model explained 55.4% of the variance of job satisfaction ($R^2 = .554$), an adjusted R^2 of .511, reflecting strong independent explanatory utility, adjusting for model size.

Overall leadership was found to be a statistically significant positive predictor of job satisfaction. The regression coefficient of Leadership total was $B = 0.49$ ($SE = 0.07$), $t = 7.11$, $p < .001$. This entails that a positive association between the perceived leadership and the teacher's job satisfaction was greater, after all demographic and contextual factors were accounted for. Conversely, neither of the control variables proved to be strong but statistically significant predictors of job satisfaction when leadership was included: age ($p = .823$), years

of teaching experience ($p = .775$), gender ($p = .731$), and school type ($p > .60$). Interpretive suggestion: Earlier comparisons between the groups showed some differences related to the type of school and certain demographic factors. However, when leadership was included in the model, these differences became much less significant.

Concluding quantitative data analysis, the results of the regression analysis showed that: (1) the overall model explained over half the variance in teachers' job satisfaction ($R^2 = .554$; adjusted $R^2 = .511$); (2) the leadership level of the principal was a powerful, statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction ($B = 0.49$, $p < .001$); (3) that demographic variables (age, gender, teaching experience) and school type did not significantly predict job satisfaction with or without the leader being present.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

Qualitative results of semi-structured interviews with eight teachers and four principals from four schools are presented in this section. The analysis is organized into four interconnected themes: (1) people-centered leadership, (2) determinants of job satisfaction, (3) professional development and recognition, (4) the impact of career stage and school context. Each theme demonstrates how leadership styles are experienced in everyday school life and how they shape teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.

4.2.1. People-Centered Leadership and Its Influence on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

All four principals of schools felt their leadership philosophy was centered around the individuals, emphasizing trust, empathy, and respect for teachers as professionals. Leadership wasn't characterized as control but service and support.

As one principal reported:

If I were just a teacher, I would want the principal to be someone who advises and supports me, not someone to fear (Interview, School Principal, Urban Public School).

This perspective depicts a transition from hierarchical authority toward relational leadership, where trust and psychological safety are stressed. Such leadership methods appear to diminish fear-based compliance and instead foster professional autonomy and participation. These perceptions were confirmed by teachers who mentioned respectful communication in terms of dignity and trust. An experienced teacher noted:

She (principal) speaks to us on the same level. She has never put herself ahead of others. (Interview, Teacher 2, Urban Public School).

This remark highlights how respectful communication adds to teachers' sense of dignity and professional recognition. In this approach, leadership techniques significantly influence job satisfaction through everyday interpersonal interactions. Similarly, a principal from a regional school emphasized fairness and organizational justice:

You need to create the right conditions first. Only then are the demands fair (Interview, School Principal, Regional School).

This perspective shows a leadership approach that promotes justice and the development of professional skills, where providing favorable conditions is crucial for keeping individuals accountable. This accords with views about instructional and

transformational leadership, which indicate that leaders should first build a supportive environment before setting performance requirements.

Within this context, democratic leadership emerges as a complementary approach, as it promotes teacher ownership when combined with clear structures and guidance. It was consistently seen as desirable in a variety of contexts, especially when teachers participated in decisions about workload, school priorities, and professional development. Teachers' feeling of being agency is strengthened by this kind of involvement, which also helps them make more educated and context-sensitive decisions. But the results also show that democratic leadership by itself is insufficient if it isn't counterbalanced by firmness.

If it's purely liberal, you don't always get results. Sometimes you must decide firmly (e.g., Interview, School Principal, Regional School)

This implies that although participatory leadership increases ownership and participation, it needs to be combined with decisive leadership and clear accountability to guarantee successful results.

4.2.2. Determinants of Teachers' Job Satisfaction: Climate, Motivation, and Workload

The psychological climate that exists in the school was identified as the most significant contributing variable to job satisfaction. A Principal from a rural public school stated:

The situation in the school, the psychological climate, comes first (Interview, School Principal, Rural School).

The principal believes that the psychological climate of the school environment should become the primary element that drives effective school operations. The principal considers the creation of a positive and secure space that supports both teachers and students as the school's most important operational goal. The leadership

perspective shows that school success depends on three essential elements, which include well-being, relationships, and organizational culture.

Moreover, other teachers also described collegial unity and mutual support as protective factors against stress. A teacher noted:

Our team is very good and helpful to one another. In every respect, we support each other (Interview, Teacher 2, Urban Public School).

Teachers emphasized that a supportive climate is not accidental but is cultivated through leadership that promotes trust, fairness, and cooperative values.

Student achievement was always recognized as the most critical priority for educational institutions. A teacher from a private school described:

Seventy to eighty percent of my satisfaction comes from the students themselves (Interview, Teacher 2, Private School).

This demonstrates how students' involvement, development, and accomplishments have a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction. It implies that student achievements are a major source of teachers' personal motivation. This viewpoint emphasizes the close relationship between student achievement and teacher job satisfaction, suggesting that effective student experiences and performance have a major impact on teachers' sense of competence and fulfillment.

A schoolteacher from an urban public school expressed satisfaction through the long-term impact, rather than through formal indicators:

If a pupil says they have learned to sew and can do it themselves, that alone means my lesson achieved its goal (Interview, Teacher 2, Urban Public School).

However, satisfaction is undermined by workloads, paperwork, and time pressures. Positive change, leaders can have a positive impact on the people who lead and are in charge of an organization when they respond positively to the needs of the workforce. Despite high levels of overall satisfaction among

teachers, over-subscription to and excessive amount of paperwork, as well as administrative burden and time pressure, were repeatedly identified as the reasons for dissatisfaction. The teacher from a rural public school reported:

The most challenging aspects are the bureaucratic and administrative burdens, especially the excessive paperwork (Interview, Teacher 2, Rural School).

A teacher from an urban public school also commented:

There is a lot of paperwork, an increased workload, and time constraints (Interview, Teacher 2, Urban Public School).

These claims suggest that excessive paperwork and administrative workload are the main causes of teacher dissatisfaction across different school contexts. Teachers highlight that time pressure and bureaucratic demands significantly hinder teachers' ability to focus on their core teaching responsibilities.

Also teachers agreed that these challenges were systemic and often beyond the control of principals. But they stress that the responsiveness of leadership, flexibility, understanding, and fair distribution of responsibilities can reduce negative effects and burnout.

4.2.3. Professional Development, Recognition, and Teacher Motivation

Principals mentioned the availability and active engagement they provided for professional development through mentorship, training, competitions, and qualification progress.

This year, this teacher, we support them from all sides (Interview, School Principal, Private School)

Therefore, the principal ensures that teachers receive thorough support in their professional tasks by taking a proactive and supportive leadership position. It shows a focus on the growth and well-being of teachers, which can boost their motivation and job satisfaction.

Teachers also confirmed that such support increased confidence, competence, and commitment. A teacher from school stressed the need for freedom to develop:

She [principal] doesn't restrict you. If you want to participate, she will allow you to (Interview, Teacher 2, Rural school)

In an urban public school, experienced teachers said that professional encouragement led to greater loyalty to the school as well as to greater respect.

Recognition, both formal and informal, was consistently cited as a key motivating factor. A teacher from an urban school said acknowledgement had emotional value when she said:

To hear kind words from the school principal is an honour in itself (Interview, Teacher 2, Urban school)

Teachers also insisted that recognition should be coupled with fairness and transparency. A teacher at a regional school reported:

Motivation increases when the work of teachers is valued; morale decreases when it is not valued (Interview, Teacher 2, Regional School).

The results show that teachers' dedication and loyalty to their work increase through their confidence when they receive support from leadership that empowers them through professional autonomy and provides them with recognition. Teachers require both fairness and transparency from their administrators because these elements create authentic teacher motivation and teacher morale, which are needed for the success of such methods.

4.2.4. Career Experience, School Context, and Leadership Effects on Job Satisfaction

Novice teachers and experienced teachers had different work conditions because their professional requirements and job expectations, and job satisfaction levels differed from each other. The rural school teacher stated that

Young teachers tend to have higher satisfaction, while experienced teachers have more stable satisfaction (Interview, Teacher 2, Rural School).

Novice teachers were reported to require encouragement, feedback, and support for the development of their students, and experienced teachers described satisfaction centered on mastery, professional identity, and respect. Urban public school teachers rejected the negative assumptions about their experience and instead showed how their teaching careers brought them respect and expertise, which they viewed as essential for their professional advancement.

Principals stated that strategies were contextually dependent. A principal of a private school mentioned:

A style that works in one school may not work in another (Interview, School Principal, Private School).

Another school principal supported:

Even the location of the school matters while managing it (Interview, School Principal, Regional School)

Principals emphasized that good leadership cannot rely on a single, standardized strategy by stating that techniques were contextually relevant. Rather, they stressed the necessity of adapting management strategies to the unique features of every school, such as its location, the resources that are available, the characteristics of its staff, and the needs of its students. According to this viewpoint, effective school leadership

requires adaptability, situational awareness, and responsiveness since approaches that work in one setting might not work in another.

This context-sensitive nature of leadership is also reflected in teachers' experiences across different school types. Urban public school teachers, in particular, focus on stability, equity, and professional respect rather than on innovation-driven incentives. In contrast, private school teachers reported higher job satisfaction and better perceptions of leadership by teachers, consistent with the pattern in the numerical analysis that private schools were the most favorable contexts.

4.3. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The study demonstrates that principal leadership functions as the primary factor that determines teacher job satisfaction through its direct and indirect effects. Leadership showed a strong and statistically significant relationship with job satisfaction according to quantitative analysis, which identified leadership as the top predicting factor for the regression model for demographic and school-type factors ($R^2 = .554$; adjusted $R^2 = .511$; $B = 0.49$, $p < .001$).

The results indicate that leadership explains a significant portion of the variance in teachers' job satisfaction, which establishes its essential role within the system. The qualitative data support these findings by showing how leadership creates its impact through different mechanisms. Teachers consistently described leadership in terms of respect, fairness, recognition, consultation, and protection from excessive stress.

The combination of these elements establishes a positive psychological climate at schools, which helps teachers maintain their motivation and professional activities while they provide high-quality instruction. The two strands of research mutually

reinforce each other because the quantitative results establish leadership as a strong predictor, which the qualitative findings demonstrate through their explanation of how leadership practices create increased job satisfaction. The integrated interpretation shows that leadership functions as a vital statistical element because it exists as a concrete relationship which defines teachers' everyday work experiences.

4.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter reported mixed-methods findings on the influence of principals' leadership style on teachers' job satisfaction in four different school contexts. Quantitatively, teachers described being moderately satisfied at work with positive perceptions of leadership. Job satisfaction varied considerably between school types; private schools reported higher satisfaction than rural and urban public schools, and gender differences were insignificant. Age and length of teaching experience were significantly associated with job satisfaction among participants in group comparisons. Leadership has positive and significant associations with job satisfaction across all variables, and regression analyses indicated that overall leadership was a consistent predictor of satisfaction at work, explaining more than half the variance of the study and making demographic and school-type variables non-significant. In qualitative terms, principals and teachers identified leadership as most impactful when people-centered and respectful, democratically oriented but well balanced by needed structure, and responsive to teachers' workload pressures. Participants identified psychological climate and collegial relationships as key factors to well-being, student achievement as the primary intrinsic motivator, and recognition and professional development support as the primary sources of motivation and

commitment. The perceptions of those at various stages in their careers and different school contexts influenced the meaning of leadership and what teachers valued most, revealing the effectiveness of leadership to be situational and developmentally responsive.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In the previous chapter, I laid out the key findings of the study. In this chapter, I discuss those findings in relation to research. As such, this chapter discusses the study's findings in relation to the theoretical and empirical literature. The discussion is organized according to four research questions, which examine (a) principals' leadership styles, (b) teachers' job satisfaction across different school contexts, (c) job satisfaction differences based on demographic and professional characteristics between school types, (d) principals' leadership styles and their relationship with job satisfaction, and qualitative perspectives that show statistical group differences.

The central claim advanced in this chapter is that, across different school contexts in West Kazakhstan, teachers' job satisfaction appears to be shaped less by demographic characteristics and more by how school principal leadership is experienced in everyday school life, particularly through fairness, consultation, support, recognition, and the management of workload.

5.1. Leadership styles practiced by school principals across schools

This section analyzes school principals' leadership styles practiced in four different school contexts in West Kazakhstan. Rather than focusing on a single dominant leadership model, the analysis explores how various leadership styles are perceived by teachers and enacted in practice. The sub-sections of the chapter present a unified analysis of leadership patterns discovered through statistical research and teachers' authentic school experiences, especially focusing on how principals' leadership develops across different contexts and how it operates in daily school activities.

5.1.1 Leadership patterns identified in the quantitative strand

One of the key findings of the quantitative strand was that teachers in private schools reported higher levels of perceived principal's leadership style, which was associated with greater job satisfaction, compared to teachers in rural public schools, who reported lower levels of both variables. The research supports existing literature, which identifies school leadership as the main factor that affects teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention (Leithwood et al. 2008, OECD 2020). The OECD 2020 study shows that leadership practices that build trust between staff members, create collaborative environments, and offer professional development opportunities lead to higher teacher job satisfaction in all educational systems.

Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2008) argue that leadership has a significant indirect influence on teacher outcomes through shaping school climate and organizational conditions. However, the study evaluates leadership through its perceived effectiveness instead of assessing its actual implementation. Ingersoll (2001) shows that teachers develop their views about school leadership based on their actual working environment, which includes their job demands and degree of independence and availability of materials. This raises an important interpretive challenge: higher ratings of principals' leadership style in private schools may reflect not only more effective leadership practices, but also more favourable institutional environments that make leadership more visible and positively experienced.

This interpretation is further complicated by contrasting evidence in the literature. While some studies suggest that centralized public education systems can sustain strong and coherent leadership practices through standardization and policy alignment (OECD, 2020), others argue that excessive centralization can constrain school-level agency and limit the enactment of responsive leadership (Hallinger, 2018).

The study found that rural public schools experienced lower leadership and job satisfaction scores, which indicate that structural limitations, together with restricted resources and administrative responsibilities, and diminished decision-making power, stop leaders from executing their duties and their role as leaders. The findings contribute to existing research because they show that leadership effectiveness depends on particular organizational and system elements and not just the capabilities of individual leaders. This reinforces a growing shift in the field towards understanding leadership as a distributed and context-dependent practice rather than an individual attribute (Spillane, 2006).

The implications for educational policy in Kazakhstan are significant. Current reform efforts often prioritize principals' leadership development through training and professional standards; however, the findings of this study suggest that such approaches may be insufficient if they do not address underlying structural inequalities between school contexts.

Particularly, rural public schools need specific policy solutions that will improve resource allocation and decrease administrative tasks while allowing schools to develop their own governance systems. The leadership development programs face serious dangers because they demand school principals to meet unattainable standards while they work in limited-resource situations. Therefore, improving teacher job satisfaction and retention in Kazakhstan may depend not only on strengthening the leadership capacity of principals, but also on creating the organizational conditions under which principals' leadership can be meaningfully enacted and experienced.

5.1.2. Leadership patterns identified in the qualitative strand

One key finding of the qualitative strand is that teachers view principals' leadership as an ethical relationship that requires teachers to develop their skills through continuous interaction with school principals and staff members. This finding corresponds to the framework by James Spillane (2006), because he defined leadership as a social practice that develops through human interaction instead of existing within established organizational structures. The research study by Bryk and Schneider (2002) demonstrated that schools need to establish relational trust as their foundational element for achieving successful school development. The present study expands existing research by demonstrating that ethical and supportive leadership functions as an essential component in Kazakhstan because it enables teachers to maintain their professional development when working under conditions with limited resources. This introduces a critical nuance: while distributed and relational leadership models are often presented as normative "best practices," their enactment may be driven less by reform agendas and more by contextual demands, particularly in systems where formal structures are insufficient to support teachers. Thus, principals' leadership should be understood not only as socially constructed, but also as contextually compelled.

A second key finding is that teachers perceive principals' leadership primarily through their personal relationships with school principals, particularly through emotional support and everyday interactions. This supports existing research suggesting that leadership is often experienced through interpersonal engagement rather than formal policy or strategic direction (Leithwood et al., 2006). At the same time, this finding raises an important tension in the literature. The positive results of relational leadership, which creates trust and teacher dedication for schools, require educational leaders to avoid using personal relationships as their main leadership technique. The present findings show that teachers consider emotional and relational aspects to be more

important than technical and instructional leadership competencies, which differ from studies that analyze leadership through its visible practices, including setting direction and developing people and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2008). The situation shows how school policies create obstacles that prevent staff members from achieving their work objectives. In the Kazakhstani context, where formal accountability structures are still developing, leadership may be interpreted more through relational proximity than through measurable outcomes. This indicates a need to balance relational leadership with stronger instructional leadership frameworks in policy and practice.

Another important finding is that participants emphasized the value of collaborative and democratic leadership, but expressed uncertainty about how participatory practices are implemented in practice. The literature demonstrates a documented conflict that exists between the principles of distributed leadership and its actual implementation in organizations. The distributed leadership frameworks (Spillane, 2006) promote shared decision-making combined with collective responsibility between leaders and followers in organizations. Critics of these models argue that organizations need to establish specific systems that define roles for employees and develop their skills to achieve actual collaboration between their members. The study results demonstrate that teachers wanted to take part in decision-making processes, but they needed a better understanding of the decision-making procedures that existed in official institutional structures. The findings indicate that participatory leadership exists in Kazakhstan as an official practice, but it lacks proper institutionalization. As a result, democratic leadership risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative, unless supported by transparent procedures and equitable participation mechanisms.

Taken together, the study findings demonstrate significant effects on both educational policies and practices that operate within Kazakhstan. The current reforms focus on developing leadership abilities of principals through training programs and established professional standards, yet qualitative research demonstrates that leadership exists as an essential part of organizational, relational, and systemic patterns. The policy efforts need to establish institutional frameworks which enable participatory decision-making while decreasing administrative work to support both relational and instructional leadership, and achieve alignment between policy requirements and actual school operations. Leadership reforms need to establish complete system alignment because they will otherwise function as unachievable ambitions while not producing actual change. The study presents findings that show that leadership functions as a practice that depends on contextual factors and develops through social interactions, thus providing new insights into how leadership functions in Kazakhstan.

5.2. Teachers' primary job satisfaction orientations across schools

Research Question 2 (RQ2), which investigates teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, discovered that teachers' job experiences depend on both internal and external factors, which function in distinct ways across different school environments. The teachers identified their intrinsic sources of satisfaction, which included student achievement and professional development opportunities, as the most important elements for their professional fulfilment. The study found that extrinsic factors, which included workload requirements, administrative responsibilities, working environment conditions, recognition, and leadership support, were more commonly connected to dissatisfaction.

However, the findings also suggest a more complex interaction between these categories than classical theory implies. While intrinsic factors contributed to positive professional identity and meaning, their impact appeared to be mediated by the quality of extrinsic conditions. In contexts where workload and administrative pressures were high - particularly in public and rural schools, the positive effects of intrinsic motivators were often diminished. The research shows that teacher satisfaction results from the interaction between meaningful work and organizational support systems instead of maintaining a strict distinction between internal and external work factors (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The present study demonstrates how school structural elements restrict teachers from maintaining their natural work motivation to achieve ongoing job satisfaction, which exists as a common understanding in existing research.

The different job satisfaction levels that schools display demonstrate that this psychological state develops through individual experience but exists as a system-driven reality. Teachers in schools that have strong leadership and reasonable workload requirements and professional development systems found in high-resource environments achieved greater job satisfaction. Teachers experienced higher levels of dissatisfaction in environments that required administrative work while providing insufficient resources despite their dedication to student achievement. The finding supports research that shows that teacher retention and well-being depend on both internal motivation and external organizational and policy factors (OECD, 2020).

5.2.1. Evidence of intrinsic satisfaction orientations

One of the key results of the qualitative strand of the study is that teachers identified student achievement as the main source of internal motivation and job satisfaction. In all eight interviews, participants consistently emphasized that their sense

of professional fulfillment is closely related to their relationship with students and the long-term impact of student educational outcomes.

This result is consistent with the Self-Determination Theory, which explains a person's motivation through meeting basic psychological needs, in particular competence, autonomy, and connectedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this context, student success enhances teachers' sense of competence and relevance, thereby supporting their internal motivation.

At the same time, this study expands this theoretical perspective, showing that in the context of Kazakhstan, internal motivation is due not only to internal psychological needs, but also has a pronounced relational character - it is rooted in significant interactions between teacher and student, as well as in the feeling of long-term social contribution. This suggests that internal satisfaction in pedagogical activity is more socially determined than traditional individualistic motivation models suggest.

At the same time, the data reveal an important contradiction. Despite the fact that teachers demonstrate high internal motivation, they also note only a moderate level of overall job satisfaction, which is due to high workload and administrative requirements. This result challenges simplistic ideas that intrinsic motivation itself is sufficient to ensure the well-being of teachers.

On the contrary, he confirms the growing body of research, according to which internal satisfaction can decrease under the influence of adverse working conditions. For example, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) argue that even highly motivated teachers can experience a decrease in job satisfaction with excessive workload, lack of time, and insufficient organizational support. Similarly, OECD (2020) emphasizes that workload is one of the most significant factors predicting stress and professional burnout of teachers, even in the context of their high commitment to student learning.

Thus, the results of this study show that intrinsic motivation, although a prerequisite, is not sufficient in itself to maintain job satisfaction in the absence of favorable structural conditions.

This has important implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical point of view, the results contribute to existing scientific discussions, showing that internal and external factors are not independent, but interact dynamically: high internal motivation can support the professional commitment of teachers, but its positive impact depends on the availability of managed and favorable working conditions.

From the point of view of educational policy in Kazakhstan, this means that efforts to increase teacher satisfaction cannot be based solely on the development of professional meaning and mission (for example, through updating curricula or introducing student-centered approaches), but must also take into account systemic problems such as workload management and reducing administrative burden. In the absence of such a balance, there is a risk that high internal motivation will not lead to sustainable satisfaction, but to excessive involvement and, ultimately, to professional burnout.

Thus, although students' achievements are a powerful source of internal motivation, their positive impact on job satisfaction depends on the conditions in which teachers work. This emphasizes the need to consider internal motivation in close connection with external constraints, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section on external sources of job dissatisfaction.

5.2.2. Evidence of extrinsic satisfaction orientations

The study's qualitative research brought forth one major finding, which showed external factors, especially workload, administrative requirements, and time constraints, decreased teacher job satisfaction because teachers maintained high internal motivation.

Teachers reported that their teaching activities faced restrictions because excessive documentation and reporting obligations, combined with their limited time resources, created barriers that prevented their teaching practice from succeeding. The study results confirm earlier research, which established a connection between heavy teaching workloads and bureaucratic obligations that create teacher stress and occupational burnout and decreased job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The study demonstrates that people perceive their workloads as individual stressors while they exist as fundamental aspects that define their whole work setting. The problem needs to be analyzed through its structural sources, which find their origin in organizational and political systems that define educational practices. The conclusion is clear: improving teacher satisfaction requires not only increasing motivation but also addressing institutional problems that create excessive workloads.

Another key result is that recognition and fairness are the most important external factors affecting teachers' job satisfaction, especially when they are perceived as transparent and fair. Teachers described recognition not merely as a formal reward, but as an emotionally meaningful affirmation of the value of their labor, closely tied to a sense of justice. This result is in line with studies by Brun and Dugas (2008), which show that fair and transparent recognition practices increase employee morale and satisfaction. However, the present study adds further nuance by demonstrating that recognition loses its motivational value if perceived as inconsistent or biased. This is consistent with the theory of organizational justice, according to which the fairness of procedures and results is a key condition for maintaining employee engagement. In the context of Kazakhstan, where institutional practices can differ significantly between schools, this result indicates that the creation of clear, transparent, and fair recognition systems can play an important role in increasing teacher satisfaction.

The study also shows that support for professional development is an important external factor that increases job satisfaction by strengthening the confidence and sense of professional competence of teachers. Teaching and professional development opportunities were highly valued by teachers, especially when accompanied by support from school leadership.

The work of Lieberman and Miller (2011) demonstrates that ongoing professional learning functions as an essential requirement for teachers to maintain their motivation and develop their professional identity. The research results show that different school environments create different experiences for teachers who want to participate in professional development programs. Some opportunities became restricted because organizations failed to distribute their resources in a fair manner, which decreased their potential advantages. The need for professional development calls for both its delivery to educators and its distribution through systems that guarantee equal access and match their specific requirements. The educational system in Kazakhstan requires both national and school-level policies to establish permanent professional learning systems that adapt to their specific contexts instead of using temporary training programs.

In general, the results of the study show that teachers' job satisfaction is formed as a result of the interaction of internal motivation and external working conditions, and is not determined by each of these components separately. Although teachers demonstrate a high commitment to student success and find meaning in their professional activities, their satisfaction largely depends on structural and organizational factors, including workload, recognition, and access to professional development.

Thus, the study shows that in order to understand teachers' job satisfaction, it is necessary to pay special attention to the school context and systemic conditions. For educational policy and practice in Kazakhstan, this means that efforts to improve the

well-being and retention of teachers must go beyond individual interventions and take into account broader structural challenges.

5.3. Differences in Teachers' Job Satisfaction across Schools

This section is devoted to research question 3 (RQ3), which examines how teachers' job satisfaction varies depending on different school contexts and demographic characteristics, based on an analysis of the results of both quantitative and qualitative stages of the study. The data obtained show that teacher satisfaction with work is unevenly distributed and significantly depends on the type of school, organizational conditions and individual professional characteristics. This is confirmed by a growing body of research, according to which teacher satisfaction is determined not only by their internal motivation, but also by contextual and systemic factors (OECD, 2020).

One of the key patterns identified is that the school context, in particular the differences between private, urban public, and rural public schools, plays a central role in creating teacher satisfaction. Teachers working in more autonomous and better resourced settings tend to show higher levels of satisfaction, while in more limited contexts, there is a higher degree of dissatisfaction, often associated with high workload, administrative requirements and insufficient support. This result is consistent with international studies highlighting the importance of school conditions, including leadership, access to resources, and professional culture, for the well-being of teachers. At the same time, the present study expands the existing scientific base, demonstrating how these differences are rooted in the specific structural features of the educational system of Kazakhstan, where differences in management, funding and level of autonomy create unequal working conditions in schools.

In addition to contextual factors, the analysis also considers individual differences, including teaching experience, professional roles, and teacher expectations. While previous studies often consider these variables as independent predictors of job satisfaction, the results show that their influence is mediated by the school context. For example, experienced teachers may demonstrate higher stability and internal motivation, but at the same time experience dissatisfaction in conditions of high workload and limited autonomy. This supports research findings that individual characteristics interact with organizational settings rather than acting in isolation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Thus, this section argues that differences in teacher job satisfaction should be considered as the result of a dynamic interaction between internal motivation and contextual conditions, and not as an isolated influence of individual factors. This has important consequences for the educational policy of Kazakhstan: increasing teacher satisfaction requires differentiated and context-oriented approaches that take into account both the professional needs of teachers and the structural conditions of their work. The following subsections provide a more detailed analysis of these differences, focusing on specific contextual and demographic parameters.

5.3.1. School Type

One of the key findings of the study is that private school teachers show a higher level of job satisfaction compared to public school teachers, including both rural and urban teachers. This pattern is consistent with international studies showing that teachers working in more autonomous and better resourced educational institutions tend to experience higher levels of professional satisfaction. For example, OECD (2020) emphasizes that school autonomy, access to resources, and favorable working

conditions are closely linked to positive results for teachers, including job satisfaction and retention. At the same time, the present study expands this scientific base, showing that in the context of Kazakhstan these benefits are distributed unevenly between the types of schools, while private schools offer more favorable organizational conditions that strengthen both leadership practices and professional experience of teachers. This suggests that differences in satisfaction are associated not so much with the type of school as such, but with structural advantages built into certain institutional models.

The second important result is that organizational conditions - in particular access to resources, institutional support and the level of autonomy of teachers - play a key role in shaping their professional experience. This finding aligns with research by Richard Ingersoll (2001), who argues that teacher satisfaction is largely determined by organizational characteristics such as participation in decision-making, administrative support, and working conditions. Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) show that autonomy and supportive environments are important predictors of teacher motivation and well-being. However, the present study introduces additional nuance by demonstrating that these factors are unevenly distributed between different types of schools, which leads to different professional experiences of teachers. Thus, job satisfaction does not act as an individual characteristic, but as a result of institutional conditions that either contribute to or limit the professional activities of teachers.

Interestingly, the results also show that there are no significant differences in satisfaction between teachers in rural and urban public schools, which contradicts a number of international studies that often emphasize differences between these contexts, especially in terms of resources and working conditions. This may indicate that in the Kazakhstani education system, state schools, regardless of their geographical location, function within similar management structures and political restrictions, which leads to a comparable experience of teachers. This result challenges the assumption that the

geographical factor is the main determinant of job satisfaction, and, on the contrary, confirms the importance of systemic factors such as centralized policies and standardized administrative requirements (OECD, 2020).

Finally, the study shows that although the school context is an important factor affecting job satisfaction, it does not act as an independent determinant, but interacts with other elements, such as leadership practices and working conditions. This is consistent with modern research emphasizing the interaction of contextual and organizational factors in shaping the professional experience of teachers (Hallinger, 2018). In particular, it is shown that leadership can mediate the influence of contextual constraints by shaping the school climate, distributing workload, and supporting the professional development of teachers. Therefore, differences in job satisfaction between types of schools should be considered as the result of a complex interaction of interconnected factors, and not as a direct consequence of belonging to a certain category of school.

From the point of view of Kazakhstan's educational policy, these results are important. They show that efforts to improve teacher satisfaction should not focus exclusively on individual types of schools, but should focus on improving basic organizational conditions that differ in different contexts. In particular, improving equity in resource allocation, increasing teacher autonomy, and developing leadership capacity may prove more effective than purely structural reforms. Without such targeted measures, differences in teacher satisfaction between different school contexts are likely to persist.

5.3.2. Sex and Gender

The research discovered that there exists no statistically meaningful distinction between the job satisfaction levels of male and female teachers which shows that gender does not determine how teachers in the study group experience their work. The finding

supports multiple international studies which demonstrate that gender-based differences in job satisfaction are not present or change between different work environments. According to OECD (2020) research job satisfaction shows greater variation because of workplace conditions and leadership effectiveness and employee workload than it does because of demographic factors which include gender. The research conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) demonstrates that school climate and administrative support, together with emotional demands, emerge as stronger indicators of teacher satisfaction than gender differences. The research findings demonstrate that organizational and contextual elements drive teachers' job satisfaction more than their individual demographic attributes including gender. The scientific literature has shifted from looking at individual factors as the basis for teacher motivation toward research that examines whole systems and specific contexts (Hallinger, 2018). The absence of gender distinctions shows that teachers' professional development depends mainly on their workplace environment, which includes leadership styles, their work responsibilities, and institutional assistance.

Kazakhstan's educational policy results show that teacher satisfaction improvement needs to focus on better work conditions and better organizational practices instead of creating solutions that address demographic factors. The study results show that gender equality requires systemic reforms, which will improve teacher wellbeing and retention through better workload management, leadership development, and resource distribution.

5.3.3. Teaching Experience and Age

One of the key results is that teaching experience and age are associated with differences in the level of job satisfaction, while middle-career teachers demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction compared to novice teachers. This is consistent with studies showing that early career teachers often experience lower satisfaction due to stress, high

workload, and the need to adapt to professional requirements (OECD, 2020; Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

The pattern exists because teachers develop their professional identity while they progress through their training process, and their experience grows. The results demonstrate that context determines the benefits because workers require supportive conditions to sustain their satisfaction. The study shows a major contradiction between scientific literature and its findings, which demonstrate that experience improves stability and confidence but can lead to professional burnout when employees lack opportunities for growth. The relationship between seniority and satisfaction shows non-linear behavior, which depends on whether workers have access to development opportunities.

At the same time, the study reflects an important contradiction in the scientific literature: although experience contributes to the growth of stability and confidence, it can also lead to stagnation or professional burnout if there is no room for further development. This indicates that the relationship between seniority and satisfaction is not linear and depends on the availability of opportunities for professional growth. From the point of view of Kazakhstan's educational policy, the results indicate the need for an approach that takes into account the stages of the professional career of teachers: strengthening adaptation and mentoring programs for novice teachers, as well as ensuring constant professional development and recognition for experienced teachers. Thus, job satisfaction is formed as a result of the interaction of the career stage and organizational conditions, and is not determined solely by work experience.

5.3.4. Teaching Subject and Educational Background

One of the key results is that the relationship between the subject taught and job satisfaction is contradictory and uncertain, indicating that the subject area is not a stable or independent predictor of satisfaction. This is in line with research showing that differences related to the subject of teaching are most often mediated by contextual and organisational factors such as leadership, school climate, and working conditions (OECD, 2020). Given this ambiguity, the results should be interpreted with caution as they may reflect methodological limitations, including sample size and the impact of unaccounted contextual variables. This highlights a broader problem in the research field - the difficulty of distinguishing the influence of the subject of teaching separately from institutional conditions. The study suffers from a major constraint because researchers could not assess teacher educational levels because of missing data, which restricted their ability to interpret results and showed that upcoming research needs extensive data collection.

The results demonstrate that job satisfaction at schools differs according to their educational level, teaching experience, and age of teachers, while gender does not affect this relationship, which shows that contextual elements and professional development stages have a greater impact than demographic factors. Teacher job satisfaction should be understood as a complex phenomenon because it develops through specific educational situations and needs complete evaluation instead of being explained through single elements.

5.4. Relationship between School Principals' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Job Satisfaction

This section presents an integrated interpretation of the relationship between the leadership of school leaders and teacher satisfaction with work, combining the results of

the quantitative and qualitative stages of the study. Unlike considering these relationships separately, the analysis makes a broader argument: teachers' job satisfaction is less determined by demographic characteristics and more dependent on how leadership is implemented and perceived in everyday school life. In particular, practices such as equity, participation in decision-making, recognition, support and load management are proving to be key to the professional well-being of teachers in different contexts. This integrated approach is consistent with studies showing that leadership influences teacher outcomes predominantly through shaping school climate and working conditions rather than through direct impact (Leithwood et al., 2008).

One of the key findings of integration is that the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction is both relational and structural. Quantitative data demonstrate a positive relationship between perceived leadership and job satisfaction, while qualitative results show that teachers interpret leadership through everyday interpersonal interactions - primarily in the categories of support, trust, and justice. This confirms the distributed leadership approach of James Spillane (2006), which considers leadership as a practice that arises in the process of social interactions. However, the present study adds to this perspective by showing that relational leadership alone is not enough without supportive organizational conditions. In situations of high workload and significant administrative requirements, even supportive leadership can have a limited impact. Thus, the effectiveness of leadership depends not only on the quality of the relationship, but also on the structural conditions for its implementation.

At the same time, the results reveal an important tension between leadership as a manifestation of agency and leadership as a limited practice. Despite the fact that in the literature leadership is often considered as a key factor in increasing teacher satisfaction, this study shows that school principals act within systemic restrictions that affect their ability to change the professional experience of teachers. As noted by Hallinger (2018),

leadership practices are deeply rooted in contextual settings, including management structures and educational policies. The findings support this position, demonstrating that leadership can mitigate but not completely eliminate issues such as high workload, resource constraints, and bureaucratic demands. This means that leadership should not be seen as an isolated variable but as a contextually driven practice emerging within broader institutional structures.

Of particular importance is the conclusion that specific leadership practices - in particular fairness, recognition, and participation - have a disproportionate impact on teacher satisfaction. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of transparency in decision-making, fair treatment, and recognition of their contribution. This result is consistent with organizational justice research, according to which the perception of justice is closely related to employee satisfaction and commitment. However, the present study complements existing approaches by showing that such practices are particularly important in conditions of structural adversity. In contexts like these, fair and supportive leadership performs a compensatory function, reducing the negative impact of working conditions and keeping teachers motivated. Otherwise, the absence of these practices can increase dissatisfaction even under relatively stable conditions.

From the point of view of the educational policy of Kazakhstan, the results obtained are of significant importance. Although current reforms often emphasize leadership development through training programs and professional standards, integrated evidence shows that improving leadership effectiveness requires a simultaneous focus on both practices and their implementation conditions. In particular, the policy should be aimed not only at developing the interpersonal and pedagogical competencies of managers, but also at creating conditions for effective leadership - including reducing the administrative burden, ensuring a more equitable distribution of

resources, and expanding the autonomy of schools. Without such systemic support, leadership development initiatives may have a limited impact on teacher satisfaction.

The relationship between school leadership and teacher job satisfaction exists as a dynamic process that depends on contextual factors because it develops through the interaction between leadership practices and organizational conditions. This integrated approach enables you to move past basic causal models while deepening your understanding of actual school leadership operations. Research and practice both require organizations to investigate manager behavior and the work environment, together with teachers' perceptions of their actions.

5.4.1. Strength and Pattern of Leadership-Satisfaction Relationships

One of the key results of quantitative analysis is that all considered leadership measurements are positively related to teachers' job satisfaction; however, instructional and distributed leadership show an equally strong and sometimes more pronounced relationship than transformational leadership. This result is of theoretical importance, as it challenges the dominant view in the literature of transformational leadership as the main factor in teacher motivation and satisfaction (Bogler, 2001). While transformational leadership, focused on vision, inspiration, and motivation, has traditionally been associated with positive outcomes, more modern research suggests that leadership practices embedded in teachers' daily activities can have a more immediate and sustained impact. Leithwood et al. (2008) argue that the impact of leadership on teachers is primarily through improving working conditions and supporting the learning process, not just through vision-building. The present study develops this idea by demonstrating that forms of leadership closely related to teaching

practice - such as instructional and distributed leadership - can be no less or even more significant in shaping job satisfaction.

The second important result is that leadership practices directly related to the daily professional activities of teachers have the greatest impact on their job satisfaction. Teachers respond more positively to forms of leadership that directly support teaching and learning processes and ensure their participation in decision-making. This aligns with research on instructional leadership, highlighting the role of school leaders in improving teaching quality, curriculum delivery and improving student outcomes. At the same time, this reflects the increasing importance of participatory approaches to leadership, in which teachers are actively involved in the formation of school practice. Thus, the effectiveness of leadership is determined not only by the strategic direction but also by its relevance to the daily experience of teachers.

More specifically, the results show that instructional leadership fosters the professional competence of teachers and reinforces their sense of professional relevance, whereas distributed leadership shapes the conditions for autonomy, collaboration, and collective responsibility. This is consistent with research demonstrating that instructional leadership promotes professional learning and teaching excellence, while distributed leadership strengthens collective efficiency and the professional community. Distributed leadership perspective James Spillane (2006) views leadership as a practice distributed among different participants and situations, and not concentrated in one person. Similarly, Somech (2005) shows that participatory leadership enhances teachers' sense of engagement and organizational commitment. The present study supports these approaches by demonstrating that teachers value leadership practices that both develop their professional potential and engage them in shared decision-making.

At the same time, the results provide an important critique of traditional leadership models. Despite the continuing influence of transformational leadership, evidence shows that charismatic vision and motivational rhetoric alone are not enough to sustainably increase teacher job satisfaction. Leadership effectiveness depends on managers taking into account practical aspects of teachers' work, including load management, teaching support, and the organization of professional interaction. This is in line with current critical approaches calling for a shift from leader-centered models to practice-oriented and contextually sensitive ideas about leadership (Hallinger, 2018). In this sense, the present study contributes to the new consensus that leadership should be seen as a collection of interconnected practices rather than a single dominant style.

Thus, the results show that transformational leadership cannot be considered a universal model for explaining teachers' job satisfaction. On the contrary, the effectiveness of leadership is formed through the integration of instructional, distributed and relational practices closely related to the professional activities of teachers. This suggests that future research and educational policies should go beyond individual models of leadership and rely on more holistic approaches that reflect the complexity of leadership in real school settings.

5.5. Leadership as a Predictor Beyond Demographics and Context

One of the central results of the study is that school leadership is the strongest predictor of teacher job satisfaction, maintaining its explanatory power even when taking into account demographic and contextual variables. This finding is consistent with an extensive body of research demonstrating the key role of leadership in shaping teachers' professional experiences. Leithwood et al. (2008) argue that leadership is one of the most significant school factors affecting teachers, primarily through its impact on

working conditions and school climate. The present study develops this idea by showing that leadership not only affects job satisfaction, but also rearranges the influence of other variables - such as age, length of service, and type of school - on the professional experience of teachers.

In more detail, the analysis shows that the influence of demographic and contextual factors diminishes when the leadership variable is included, allowing leadership to be seen as a mediating mechanism through which teachers perceive and interpret their work environment. This is in line with the results of Collie et al. (2012), demonstrating that leadership affects job satisfaction indirectly through the school climate, relations between participants in the educational process, and working conditions. However, this study introduces an important clarification: leadership is not just one of the factors, but an integrating mechanism that filters and combines the influence of other variables, smoothing out differences between groups. This challenges traditional approaches treating demographic characteristics as major predictors and supports a more relational and context-oriented understanding of teachers' professional experiences.

From a theoretical point of view, this relationship can be further explained through the prism of internal and external motivation. Leadership practices can increase internal satisfaction, maintain meaningful teaching activities, develop professional competence, and strengthen a sense of professional purpose. At the same time, leadership also creates external working conditions, including ensuring fairness, organizing participation in decision-making, recognizing the contribution of teachers and managing the workload. This dual impact reflects a more integrated approach to motivation, with leadership influencing both internal and external aspects of professional performance.

These findings are also consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of meeting basic psychological needs - competence, autonomy, and connectedness- to maintain motivation and well-being. The study shows that leadership practices directly contribute to meeting these needs: support for teaching enhances competence, participation in decision-making develops autonomy, and trusting relationships strengthen connectedness. In this sense, leadership acts not only as an organizational factor but also as a psychological and interpretive framework through which teachers comprehend their professional experience and form their professional identity.

At the same time, the results have important theoretical significance. Although leadership is often seen as one variable along with other factors, the present study shows that it is appropriate to understand it as a meta-factor determining how other influences are perceived and interpreted. This confirms the modern shift in the scientific literature towards understanding leadership as an embedded and dynamic practice rather than an isolated independent variable (Hallinger, 2018).

Thus, the study demonstrates that leadership plays a central and integrating role in shaping teachers' job satisfaction, affecting both internal and external aspects of their activities and mediating the influence of demographic and contextual factors. This emphasizes the importance of focusing not only on the characteristics of the teachers themselves or their working conditions, but also on how leadership is implemented and perceived in school practice. For educational policy and practice in Kazakhstan, this means that developing leadership capacity, combined with improving organizational conditions, can be one of the most effective ways to improve teacher well-being and retention.

5.6. Explaining Differences Through Leadership Practices

One of the key findings of the study is that the explanatory power of demographic and contextual factors is reduced when a leadership variable is included in the analysis, allowing leadership to be seen as a central interpretive lens through which teachers perceive their professional performance. This is consistent with research showing that leadership affects teacher outcomes indirectly - through shaping the school climate and working conditions, rather than as a simple independent variable. Collie et al. (2012) demonstrate that leadership affects job satisfaction through teachers' perception of their professional environment. The present study develops this position by showing that leadership does not simply coexist with contextual factors, but actively rearranges their influence, reducing the significance of differences related to age, seniority or school type.

The second important result is that teachers interpret their job satisfaction through the school climate and professional relationships that are shaped by leadership practices. This confirms that leadership fosters a dynamic organizational environment rather than fixed institutional structures. In particular, practices such as building trust, ensuring justice, and promoting cooperation are key mechanisms for shaping the school climate. This conclusion is consistent with the work of Bryk and Schneider (2002), who consider relational trust as the most important resource for the effective functioning of the school. At the same time, the results are related to studies showing that a positive school climate is closely related to the well-being and satisfaction of teachers (Collie et al., 2012). The contribution of this study is that it demonstrates exactly how these elements are implemented in practice - through respectful communication, transparency in decision-making, and the inclusion of teachers in school life.

The study also reveals that recognition and support for professional development are the two main mechanisms through which leadership affects job satisfaction.

Teachers described recognition as a factor with both emotional and professional significance, reinforcing a sense of self-worth and belonging in the school community. This is in line with research by Brun and Dugas (2008) highlighting the role of fair and meaningful recognition in increasing employee motivation and morale. Similarly, leadership support for professional development fosters teacher confidence, competence and professional commitment, which is consistent with the work of Lieberman and Miller (2011) emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning. The present study complements this scientific base by highlighting the social and situational nature of these processes, showing that recognition and development are most effective in a supportive and relationally saturated environment.

Another important result is that leadership interacts with the stages of the professional career of teachers, determining how job satisfaction manifests itself at different stages of experience. Aspiring teachers emphasized the need for mentorship, feedback, and emotional support, whereas experienced teachers valued recognition, autonomy, and professional respect. This result is in line with the professional development models of teachers, according to which their needs change over time. However, the study makes an important clarification, showing that leadership plays a mediating role: it can both smooth and reinforce differences between career stages depending on how much it adapts to the changing needs of teachers. This confirms the need for flexible and differentiated leadership.

Finally, the study shows that administrative burden and bureaucratic requirements are key structural constraints on job satisfaction, but their negative impact can be partially mitigated through leadership practices. Teachers noted that fair load sharing, flexibility and empathy on the part of management help them cope with stress and remain motivated. This result confirms the findings of studies that excessive workload is one of the main factors of stress and dissatisfaction of teachers (Skaalvik &

Skaalvik, 2011). At the same time, this study shows that leadership can perform a protective function, reducing the negative impact of structural factors due to supportive and fair practices.

The results thus demonstrate that leadership acts as the primary mechanism through which teachers interpret and experience their professional environment. By shaping the school climate, professional relationships and working conditions, leadership reduces the relative significance of demographic and contextual differences. This allows us to consider teachers' job satisfaction not as a direct consequence of individual factors, but as a result of their mediation through leadership practices in everyday school activities.

5.7. Chapter Summary

The chapter has progressed beyond simply describing the research results to show how principal leadership affects teacher job satisfaction across various educational environments. The study findings mostly match the results of Chapter 2's literature review, yet the research introduces significant new findings that enhance present knowledge.

The study shows that teachers experience job satisfaction through their internal motivation to teach and their interactions with other people, which include their work demands, the acknowledgement they receive, and the assistance they obtain from their profession. The research demonstrates that the three elements of their study function together because leadership methods determine how teachers perceive their work environment.

The second finding of the research demonstrates that leadership should be understood as an active experience that schools and organizations experience through

their daily operations. Teachers experience leadership through their daily interactions, which demonstrate fairness, consultation, recognition, support, and responsiveness to workload pressures. Leadership controls all employment conditions, which lead to teachers developing their motivational levels, self-worth, and perceptions of fairness within their schools.

The third finding demonstrates that current leadership theory needs refinement because participatory and democratic leadership styles need more than their present value to function properly. The teachers at the school found that the successful implementation of democratic methods required organizations to establish definite operational frameworks and maintain regular operations while holding people responsible for their duties. The study shows that successful leadership needs leaders to establish connections with their teams while also managing their organizational responsibilities.

The study demonstrates that leadership functions as a more important factor than demographic characteristics when researchers attempt to understand how various factors affect job satisfaction. The leadership study found that leadership played a more important role than school type, experience, and age differences, which occurred in different school types. The study results showed that leadership explained 55.4% of job satisfaction variation, and the qualitative findings demonstrated how leadership practices affected teachers' daily work experiences, which created this statistical pattern.

The chapter shows that teacher job satisfaction depends on both teacher identity and work environment, as well as school leadership practices. The study demonstrates that organizational leadership patterns need to adopt practices that create effective professional development environments through methods that develop relationships with others and maintain organizational links.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The chapter demonstrates the main study findings, which reveal how school principals create teacher job satisfaction through their leadership activities in West Kazakhstan. The study analyzes different school types, which include private schools, rural schools, urban schools, and regional schools, to show how leadership practices affect teachers' professional development in different contexts.

The study results provide new insights into existing academic studies by showing that leadership functions as both an official organizational role and a practiced relationship-based approach, which determines how teachers experience their work through their judgment of fairness and support and acknowledgment, and their assigned tasks. The research establishes a detailed framework to demonstrate how leadership interacts with both situational factors and personal characteristics to determine teachers' job satisfaction.

This chapter integrates the main research findings, which answer the research questions, and describes their effects on both theoretical frameworks and practical applications. The study presents its constraints, which the researchers used to define future investigation paths, while they ended their analysis by explaining how their findings impact educational leadership and school development work.

6.1. Revisiting the Main Research Questions

The study explored how different school environments in West Kazakhstan affect the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction. The research shows that the leadership style of the principal is one of the primary factors determining teachers' job satisfaction. Leadership proved to be the most

important element that influenced teachers' work experiences, their professional development, motivation, and well-being. The findings indicate that teachers experienced moderate job satisfaction while they held positive views about all four leadership styles, including instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and supportive leadership. Whilst school principals' leadership has strong positive connections with teachers' job satisfaction across all leadership elements, instructional and distributed leadership showed the strongest effects. The school principal's leadership style is a significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in comparison to demographic factors, including gender, age, teaching experience, and school type. As such, a school principal's leadership style operates as the key mechanism through which teachers perceive their work environment, because it surpasses both organizational systems and individual employee characteristics.

Furthermore, teachers described leadership as a people-centered and relationship-based practice, which they used to establish respect and fairness while taking part in decision-making, showing recognition, and providing support. School principals' leadership existed in schools through practical daily activities, which created school climate and professional relationships, while teachers established their belonging and value in the school environment. Teachers developed job satisfaction through respectful communication, which treated them as equals with their leaders. This study found that leadership practices determine both their emotional responses and their relationships with colleagues. School leaders need to establish relational practices that include respect and equity and open communication because these practices serve as vital elements that lead to teacher motivation, commitment, and well-being. The study shows that teacher job satisfaction increases when school leaders create organizational systems that protect teachers' rights to receive fair treatment in their daily work relationships. The research study demonstrates that effective leadership requires

multiple approaches because it cannot be confined to a single leadership model. Teachers recognized transformational leadership as an important tool for vision development and motivation creation and personalized support, but they also considered instruction and distributed leadership as essential components of their work. The teachers found that methods that provided direct teaching support and allowed teachers to participate in decision-making processes created the most significant impact on their daily activities. Thus, school leaders should establish leadership methods that combine different styles instead of using a single dominant style, which they currently rely on. Leadership development becomes more effective when leaders use classroom teaching methods to improve classroom instruction and teacher job satisfaction, which results in permanent advancements for both teaching and workplace happiness.

The presence of transactional leadership became apparent through its establishment of organizational frameworks and its implementation of specific performance standards and accountability systems. However, participants expressed mixed views about the system. Some participants valued the system because it provided them with clear and organized information. Other participants believed the system increased their stress levels while decreasing their ability to control their work. The study demonstrates that schools need more than transactional leadership to maintain their teachers' job satisfaction. The school leaders must develop a framework that combines organizational control with relationship-building and participatory methods to create an environment that protects teacher well-being and motivation, and professional autonomy of teachers.

The research results show that teachers' job satisfaction depends more on their work environment than on their personal demographic factors and their school type. The study found that school principals' leadership practices, which provide fair treatment to

staff members, maintain effective communication and support systems, and address teachers' needs directly impact school operations.

6.2. Implications of the Study

The research results of this study show important theoretical and practical effects on educational leadership, teacher job satisfaction, and the development of policies in Kazakhstan.

6.2.1 Theoretical Implications

The study findings show that leadership theory needs to be studied as a process that exists in different contexts instead of one main leadership style. The study demonstrates that both instructional leadership and distributed leadership systems serve to enhance teacher job satisfaction just as much as transformational leadership does in environments where teachers require both practical assistance and their input in decisions. The results demonstrate that leadership functions as a lived experience that develops through relationship building because it affects teachers through daily interactions, which involve fairness, recognition, and support. The existing frameworks require new elements that need to include relational, participatory, and structural components of leadership.

6.2.2. Practical Implications

The study results show that school leaders need to implement flexible leadership approaches that integrate multiple leadership methods to match their specific school requirements. The main responsibility of principals involves establishing trust among staff members while creating fair decision-making processes, including teachers in all stages of school operations, and providing workers with necessary training and

emotional assistance. The leadership team needs to establish a balance between participatory decision-making processes and established organizational frameworks, which enable them to operate the school efficiently.

The study recommends that leadership development programs in Kazakhstan require enhancement through their need to develop both administrative skills and interpersonal and teaching abilities. The study identifies systemic challenges that need to be addressed by policymakers, which include excessive workload and administrative burden, because these issues affect teacher job satisfaction and require solutions beyond school-level leadership.

6.2.3. Implications for School Leadership Practice

The study also shows that leadership styles that incorporate relational, participatory, and supporting characteristics have a significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction. Principals must establish systems and regulations because they need to build strong bonds with teachers, involve teachers in making decisions, and provide ongoing support that meets their work and personal development needs.

In practice, this means that school principals need to establish decision-making processes that require transparent equity and accountable operations to build trust and responsibility throughout the school community. Teachers should engage in open discussions about future decisions because it helps create an inclusive environment, which enhances their ability to work together professionally. In addition to providing both professional and emotional support to make teachers feel appreciated, principals should acknowledge and encourage teachers' efforts to improve motivation and job satisfaction. The development of transparent career advancement routes for educators leads to better teacher retention and professional development. Successful school principals achieve their goals by combining two leadership styles, which allow them to

establish clear performance standards while building a trusting relationship with their staff members who rely on their professional autonomy. The district should establish stronger instructional and distributed leadership systems to enhance school operations. The leadership model establishes its most significant effect on job satisfaction within this particular environment by using its teaching methods, which produce better learning outcomes while allowing teachers to participate in the decision-making process. The principals of schools need to transform their roles from administrative tasks towards active participation in teaching and collaborative leadership practices.

6.3. Recommendations

6.3.1. Recommendations for School Principals

Research shows that leadership methods that combine relational and participatory, and supportive elements lead to increased teacher job satisfaction, according to their findings. School principals should extend their functions beyond administrative duties by implementing leadership methods that establish student relationships and enable teacher growth through collaborative work.

The school needs to create open and just decision-making frameworks that help build trust and accountability while distributing responsibility among all school members. The process of deciding outcomes together with teachers results in better professional relationships because teachers feel they are part of the process. Principals need to deliver their staff members two types of support because they must show their appreciation for teachers while creating an environment that motivates teachers and promotes their mental health.

School leaders must establish transparent methods for distributing work responsibilities among staff members while offering staff members professional development pathways that include structured career advancement options. Effective

leadership needs its leaders to find the right balance between participatory methods and their need to establish direct operational standards, which should be followed by all team members. The established balance enables school principals to sustain their schools' stability while granting teachers the freedom to exercise their professional independence.

School principals should boost their educational leadership abilities through better instructional management and teaching activities because they need to share leadership duties with their teachers. The methods used in this study will improve teaching effectiveness while creating an environment that promotes school collaboration and student support.

6.3.2. Recommendations for Local Educational Departments

Educational departments need to assist schools through their professional development programs, which should deliver training in relational, instructional, and distributed leadership skills. The training programs for school leaders should provide them with essential skills that enable them to create positive school environments, support teachers, and build teamwork relationships.

Local authorities should also monitor and address issues related to workload, administrative burden, and resource distribution across schools. The establishment of guidelines that promote fair workload distribution, together with the reduction of unnecessary administrative work, will create better work environments for teachers and enhance their job satisfaction.

6.3.3. Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education needs to establish leadership development programs as the main focus for nationwide educational reforms and make improvements in them

on a regular basis. The policy frameworks need to include leadership training programs, while school principal preparation programs should teach both management skills and relational leadership skills, together with context-specific leadership abilities. The policy efforts need to concentrate on resolving the systemic problems that the study identified, especially the excessive documentation requirements and administrative stress that harm teacher mental health. National guidelines that establish supportive school environments, professional independence, and equitable working conditions will help schools retain teachers while enhancing educational results.

6.3.4. Recommendations for Future Research

The research findings will guide scientists in developing their future investigative work, which will be based on this study's findings. The researchers need to test their results across different locations throughout Kazakhstan to achieve better results for their study. The research needs more schools and participant inclusion because it will help better understand regional and contextual differences. Future studies should use longitudinal methods to study how leadership practices affect employee job satisfaction throughout different time periods. The research provides causal evidence that demonstrates that two elements are connected through their relationship. The research should investigate subject area differences because current findings show possible variations that sample limitations prevent from establishing definite results. The research should compare public and private schools to study how organizational factors, available resources, and staff independence affect leadership practices and teacher satisfaction.

6.4. Research Limitations

This study presents important findings that contribute to knowledge, yet it contains multiple research limitations. The research study possesses essential strengths that improve its overall worth and research credibility.

The main advantage of this study stems from its mixed-methods research approach, which enabled researchers to combine both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study used statistical evidence together with personal teacher experiences to establish a complete understanding of how leadership affects job satisfaction. The study focuses on West Kazakhstan schools to provide contextual research because this area has not received adequate attention in international academic studies. The study becomes more valuable because teachers share their insights about how they experience leadership during their daily work at school instead of using official administrative descriptions.

While there are several limitations, these are insignificant and very minor. The results become more reliable with a larger sample size because it enables better analysis of different groups for testing purposes.

Second, the study relied on teacher leadership perceptions to gather data, which did not involve direct observation of leadership practices. The actual leadership styles of the principals, which exist outside of their minds, remain unknown to them.

Third, the high correlation results between leadership dimensions, which show their conceptual connection, lead teachers to understand leadership as a complete system that encompasses all leadership styles. The results create challenges for those who want to establish distinct leadership categories.

Fourth, the study took place in West Kazakhstan, which restricts research results from being applied to educational settings in other Kazakhstan regions that have distinct learning environments.

Fifth, the qualitative sample involved a small group of people, which may not capture the full diversity of teacher experiences.

Finally, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to demonstrate how leadership affects job satisfaction.

6.5. Final Reflections

My study has brought me profound and life-changing results, which have helped me grasp educational leadership better and understand teacher job satisfaction better. I believe that school leadership impacts the learning environment because I work as a teacher in the classroom. The study provided me with better evidence to understand how leadership operates in real-life situations. I found that school principals establish formal leadership styles that they dedicate to their tasks, but their actual leadership behavior arises from daily interactions and decisions that shape teachers' work conditions.

The teachers' input had a powerful effect on me because I wanted to know what they thought. The teachers said that structural workplace conditions impact their job satisfaction, but the most important factor is how much they feel respected and appreciated in their work environment. The organization needs leaders to implement relational leadership because it is fundamental to their organization.

My research process helped me improve my research skills through mixed-methods research design and execution, and quantitative data analysis and qualitative result interpretation. The study showed that educational research needs ethical standards and reflexive evaluation, together with actual participant viewpoints, for its complex

research needs. All the difficulties from the research study resulted in my professional development because I developed better resilience through my experiences with data collection and time restrictions, and with multiple school environments. The study reached its educational objectives while it established my professional identity and developed my understanding of learning assessment.

Hence, my initial assumption that school success is primarily defined by student academic achievement is reconsidered in light of the findings of this study, which demonstrate that the leadership practices of school principals play a central role in shaping the school environment, influencing teachers' professional experiences, and sustaining long-term educational effectiveness.

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**The Impact of School Principals' Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Satisfaction:
A Mixed Methods Study**

Dear research participant!

Thank you for participating in this study.

This survey is part of the MSc study entitled: “The Impact of School Principals' Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Satisfaction: A Mixed Methods Study”. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between school principal leadership styles and teachers' perceived job satisfaction in selective and comprehensive schools in Kazakhstan.

In order to safeguard the anonymity and confidentiality of your school and participants, all data will be coded and protected in any research papers and presentations that result from this work. The school and participants will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information related to the school and participants will be removed. Confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly observed, unless the school and participants wish to be identified.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and if agreement to participation is given, it can be withdrawn at any time without prejudice.

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but your participation will contribute to a better understanding of how school leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan. Your contribution to this research by sharing your experiences can help educators, policymakers, and school leaders develop more effective strategies for supporting teachers' job satisfaction, ultimately strengthening leadership practices and fostering more sustainable and positive school environments. The study outcomes will be used to write up a report, present at scientific or professional meetings, and publish in scientific journals.

Should you have any questions about this study, please contact me at ainura.lukpanova@nu.edu.kz.

Survey

I agree to participate in this study

- a) Yes
- b) No

Section 1. About you

Please indicate your gender

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) I don't want to mention

Age: ____ years

Your subject area:

- a) Arts (Music, Visual Arts)
- b) Computer Science / Informatics
- c) Humanities (History of Kazakhstan, World History, Geography, Economics, Basics of Law)
- d) Languages (Kazakh Language, Kazakh Literature, Russian Language, Russian

- Literature, English Language)
 e) Mathematics (Mathematics, Algebra, Geometry)
 f) Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Science)\
 g) Additional Curriculum (Physical Education, Pre-Military Training)
 h) Other

Your experience in teaching

- a) 0-5 years
- b) 6-10 years
- c) 11-15 years
- d) 16 and more years

Please indicate how many years you have been working with the current principal

- a) 1-3 years
- b) 3-5 years
- c) 6-8 years
- d) More than 9 years

Section 2. Leadership Style

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your school principal's leadership style.

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4
The principal makes most decisions without consulting teachers.				
Decision-making is centralized and controlled by the principal.				
Teachers' opinions are rarely considered in important school matters.				
Teachers are not encouraged to innovate or take initiative.				
Motivation mainly comes from rewards and punishments.				
Teachers feel valued only when tasks are completed.				
Involvement in decision-making depends on teacher performance.				
Leadership roles are shared among teachers at all levels.				
Decision-making is widely distributed across the school community.				
Teachers are actively involved in school improvement initiatives.				

Promotion decisions are transparent, fair, and involve teacher input.				
Teachers feel respected, recognized, and appreciated for their contributions.				
Motivation comes from intrinsic encouragement and empowerment.				
Teachers are inspired to innovate and take initiative.				
Decision-making in the school is collaborative and inclusive.				
Teachers are equally involved in school decision-making processes.				
Teachers' input is valued and integrated into school development.				
Professional development is collaborative and peer-driven.				
Teachers share responsibility and trust in decision-making.				
Promotion is based primarily on task completion				
Professional development focuses mainly on technical task efficiency.				
Teacher motivation is strongly tied to outcomes and efficiency.				
School leadership emphasizes productivity over teacher autonomy.				

Section 3: Teachers' Job Satisfaction Towards Principals' Leadership Style

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your school principal's leadership style towards your job satisfaction

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4
My school principal provides recognition for my work.				
My principal encourages me to try new teaching approaches.				
My principal treats all teachers fairly and equitably.				
My principal helps when I encounter teaching challenges.				
My principal involves teachers in school decision-making.				

My principal ensures that school working conditions are supportive for teaching.				
The resources and facilities in my school are adequate because of leadership support.				
My principal addresses problems with working conditions when they arise.				
I feel satisfied with the leadership style of my principal.				
My principal's leadership style motivates me to perform better.				
The leadership style of my principal fosters strong collaboration among teachers.				
I receive fair recognition for my teaching performance from my principal.				
Beyond salary, my contributions are valued and recognized by the school principal				
I have the freedom to make instructional decisions in my teaching.				
My principal motivates me to teach				
My principal supports me in improving my teaching practices.				
My principal provides opportunities for professional growth.				
I feel supported by the school principal in achieving my career goals.				
Principal provides opportunities for advancement				

Section 4: Additional Comments

What aspects of your job bring you the greatest satisfaction? Please use at least 50 words.

What aspects of your job reduce your satisfaction? Please use at least 50 words.

How would you describe your school principal's leadership style? Please use at least 50 words.

In what ways does your school principal's leadership affect your motivation and satisfaction? Please use at least 50 words.

What changes would you recommend to improve teachers' job satisfaction in your school?

If you wish to participate in an interview, you can indicate your email address below:

Thank you for your time and participation in this study!

Teachers' Interview Protocol

Introduction

Welcome and thank the participant. Explain purpose: "I am studying teacher job satisfaction and the impact of principals' leadership style in shaping it. Your insights will help me better understand what influences teachers' motivation and professional satisfaction." Assure confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw. Obtain consent.

Background

1. Could you tell me a little about your teaching background - subject, years of experience, and your school type (public/private/rural/urban)?
2. How would you describe your general level of satisfaction with your teaching career?

Job satisfaction orientations

3. What aspects of your job give you the greatest sense of satisfaction? (e.g., teaching itself, recognition, teamwork, growth opportunities)?
4. What aspects of your job are most challenging or reduce your satisfaction?
5. Do you think your satisfaction is shaped more by intrinsic factors (like love of teaching, working with students) or extrinsic factors (like salary, workload, promotion opportunities)?

Differences across demographics

6. In your view, do factors like teaching experience, gender, subject area, or school type influence how satisfied teachers feel? Can you share examples?
7. Do you see differences in satisfaction among colleagues with different qualifications or backgrounds?

Leadership and satisfaction

8. How would you describe your school principal's leadership style?
9. In what ways does their leadership style influence your own job satisfaction?
10. Could you share an example when leadership practices made you feel particularly motivated or, on the other hand, discouraged?
11. How long have you been working at this school? How do you identify your role at the school?
12. How would you describe your principal's leadership style? Can you share an example?
13. In what ways does your principal affect your motivation and enthusiasm for teaching?
14. How does your principal support or hinder your professional development (e.g., training, mentoring, career opportunities)?
15. How does your principal's leadership affect the way teachers are recognized, valued, or supported in their work?
16. How do you think your principal's leadership influences relationships among teachers in terms of collaboration and support?
17. To what extent does your principal's leadership style allow teachers to participate in decision-making processes at school? How does this affect your job satisfaction?

18. In what ways do your principal's leadership practices influence your job satisfaction?

Closing

19. Are there leadership practices that you believe would improve teacher satisfaction in your school?
20. If you could recommend changes in leadership practices to improve teacher satisfaction, what would they be?
21. What advice would you give to school leaders who want to improve teachers' job satisfaction?
22. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences?

School Principals' Interview Protocol

Introduction

Welcome and thank the participant. Explain purpose: "This interview explores teachers' job satisfaction and the leadership practices that may shape it. We want to understand how principals perceive their own leadership style and its impact on teachers." Assure confidentiality and voluntary participation. Obtain consent.

Background

1. Could you tell me a little about your background as a school leader — years of experience, type of school, and leadership training (if any)?
2. How would you describe your leadership philosophy or approach?
3. How long have you been working as the principal of this school?

Teachers' job satisfaction

4. From your perspective, what are the main factors that influence teachers' job satisfaction in your school?
5. Do you notice differences in satisfaction among teachers based on their background (e.g., subject, experience, sex, qualifications)?
6. How do you try to support teachers' professional growth, motivation, and well-being?
7. What leadership practices do you find most effective in strengthening teacher morale and retention?
8. In your opinion, what factors most influence teachers' job satisfaction in your school, except for extrinsic factors?
9. How would you describe your own leadership style in managing your school?

Leadership practice and impact

10. How do you think your leadership style affects teachers' motivation and job satisfaction?
11. Could you share examples of leadership practices that have had a positive or negative impact on teachers' well-being and satisfaction?
12. How do you adjust your leadership practices to support teachers with different backgrounds, needs, or expectations?
13. Do you think leadership style should be adapted in different school contexts (urban/rural, public/private)?
14. Which leadership strategies do you use most often (e.g., setting rules and monitoring tasks, inspiring through vision, rewarding/correcting, involving teachers in decision-making)?
15. Can you share examples where your leadership style had a noticeable impact on the school or teachers?
16. What challenges do you face in balancing administrative demands with supporting teacher satisfaction?
17. What improvements in leadership practices do you believe could further enhance teacher job satisfaction?

Closing

18. What advice would you give to other principals about enhancing teachers' job satisfaction?
19. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your leadership role and how it relates to teacher motivation?

Informed Consent form

Dear Participant!

My name is Ainura Lukpanova, I am a 2nd-year Master's student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. I am inviting you to participate in the research study called: "The Impact of School Principals' Leadership Style on Teachers' Job Satisfaction: A Mixed Methods Study". Your participation in this study will involve either a live or online interview, where you are invited to share your insights and experiences of leadership and job satisfaction to contribute to a deeper understanding of how principals' leadership styles influence teachers' job satisfaction.

The interview will focus on your perceptions of your school principal's leadership style and how it affects your job satisfaction. With your permission, interviews will be **audio-recorded** to ensure accuracy of transcription and analysis. Recordings will be stored securely on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher. Audio files will be destroyed after transcription and verification, and only anonymized transcripts will be used in presentations or publications. No video recording will be conducted. Your involvement is expected to take approximately 25 to 30 minutes.

The risks associated with participating in this study are relatively low. You have the option to avoid answering specific questions or to withdraw from the study entirely at any point without incurring any penalties under any circumstances, if any of the topics that are discussed during the interview cause you to feel uncomfortable. I will ensure your comfort and address any concerns during the interview. All of the information that pertains to you will be removed without delay if you decide to withdraw from the study after the interview has been completed.

Your decision whether to participate in this study will not affect your employment, performance, evaluation, or professional standing in any way. If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but your participation will contribute to a better understanding of how school leadership styles influence teacher job satisfaction in Kazakhstan. Your contribution to this research by sharing your experiences can help educators, policymakers, and school leaders develop more effective strategies for supporting teachers' job satisfaction, ultimately strengthening leadership practices and fostering more sustainable and positive school environments. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding this research study, its procedures, risks, or benefits, please feel free to contact the master's Thesis Supervisor, Dr Gulmira Qanay, gkanayeva@nu.edu.kz. For independent inquiries or concerns about the research process or your rights as a participant, you may contact the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz. Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

Statement of Consent

I, _____,
voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I also understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signature of Participant: _____ **Date:**

Signature of Researcher: _____ **Date:**
