Investigating The Transformational Leadership Impact On Student Engagement: Mediating Role Of Student Expectation

Dodo Khan Alias Khalid Malokani[1], Lubna Oad[2], Kashif Ali Mahesar[3], Dr. Noreen Hassan[4], Prof. Dr. Seema N. Mumtaz[5], Dr. Mansoor Ali Darazi[6]

Abstract:
The study investigates mediating impact of student expectation with transformational-leadership & engagement. A sample of 240 being taken from the employees of inclusive schools in Pakistan. Structural equation modeling was employed. Findings of study reveals such as transformational leadership significantly predicts students engagement, and this relationship partially mediated student expectation. This result implies transformational leadership positively influences student expectation, which in turn enhances student engagement. These findings underscore transformational leadership significance in promoting student engagement and meeting the expectations within the premises of inclusive schooling environment. Additionally, managerial implications suggest that fostering of transformational leadership and addressing student expectations can lead to increased employee engagement and organizational effectiveness. Overall, this study contributes mechanisms for leadership impacts on students' engagement in inclusive schooling and provides insights for educational practitioners and policymakers of inclusive schools.

Keywords: Transformational leadership; Student engagement; Student expectation; Inclusive schools.

Introduction

Transformational leadership is a widely recognized leadership style and have influenced students' engagement (Pachler et al., 2019). Transformational leadership describes as motivating followers to align with organizational goals and interests, resulting in improved performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Various studies explained that transformational leadership can be implemented at different organizational levels (Malokani et al., 2022; Pachler et al., 2[1]019). This style of leadership encourages and pushes people to reach the full-fledged potential or do actions that are good for others, as well as for the leaders along with organizations. Setting of high standards, offering help and direction, and creating a feeling of

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Government College University, Hyderabad, Pakistan, (Corresponding author), ORCID: https://orcid.org/ 0009-0009-3439-4822.
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari Karachi, Pakistan.
[4]Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology. Gulshan Campus, Karachi.
[5]Chair Dept. Of Community Medicine Karachi Institute of Medical Sciences, National University of Medical Sciences, Malir Cantt. Karachi, Pakistan.
[6]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari Karachi, Pakistan.

purpose and meaning in the work are all parts of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are known for having a clear vision, being charismatic, and giving others the tools such as employees needed to succeed at new levels. Such leader teachers boost student's engagement, address unique learning requirements, encourage critical thinking, and also establish a pleasant atmosphere along with inclusive learning environment within the school premises. Consequently, leader must support inclusive school's students and improve students' engagement (DeMatthews et al., 2020). In inclusive student education, students have recently learnt valuable and knowledgeful outcomes from teachers, whereas students' learning engagement have been observed to be enhancing.

However, limited number of teacher leadership development programs has been launched to rigorous empirical testing and on student engagement in inclusive schooling learning process. This lack of empirical testing and evidence-based research on the impact related to leadership development programs on engagement of concerned students in inclusive schooling system. It highlights the need for further research activities and their evaluation to ensure that these programs are effective and beneficial for all students. Teacher leadership plays a crucial role in promoting student engagement in inclusive schooling system. Research has shown that, whenever teachers are empowered to take on leadership roles, in result such teachers encourage active student participation and engagement in pleasant and inclusive learning environment in the existing system (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Therefore, investing in rigorous empirical testing and evidence-based research on teacher leadership development programs is essential to ensure their effectiveness in enhancing student engagement. Furthermore, some teachers' capabilities are intended to bridge gap among what, the students demanding and what is actually available in the present system. Hence, empirical investigation between teacher transformational leadership capabilities would investigate the phenomenon related to inclusive student engagement also related to effective inclusive schools learning.

Hence, recent demands have appeared for inclusive school learning studies focusing more on teacher transformational leadership style (Eliophotou Menon et al., 2021), to enhance student engagement (Johar et al., 2023). Masry-Herzallah et al., (2021) found that there is need for teacher transformational leadership style in inclusive schools' learning and students' engagement. Moreover, in inclusive education research, knowledge has significant impact on inclusive students' learning, however, parent student expectation would be higher for every inclusive school's special students. As response to these demands, the purpose of study is to investigate the impact of transformational leadership style on student engagement with respect to mediating effect of students' expectation. No doubt, an increasing number of special education related students are currently, included in general education classrooms, however, this study is also advantageous to successful implantation of inclusion. The study purposefully examines leadership capabilities & student engagement towards inclusion. Additionally, researcher will discuss the importance of inclusive schooling and students' engagement. Ultimately, this research paper seeks to provide valuable insights and recommendations for educators to effectively make new and innovative policies to inclusive schools, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes and special student engagement (Yu et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Research on Student engagement

Salas-Pilco et al. (2022) has identified several key elements for higher levels of student engagement. Like positive and supportive classroom environment, opportunities for active learning and participation, clear and meaningful learning goals, and relevant and engaging instructional materials. Additionally, the presence of supportive and caring teachers connection to student' is also crucial in promoting student engagement (Ibrahim et al., 2020). A positive and supportive classroom environment creates a sense of psychological safety, allowing students to feel comfortable taking risks and participating actively in the learning process. Opportunities for active learning and participation ensure that students are actively engaged, promoting deeper understanding and knowledge retention during the learning process. Clear and meaningful learning goals help students understand the purpose and relevance of their learning, motivating them to engage and strive for success. Finally, relevant and engaging instructional materials capture students' interest and curiosity, making learning more enjoyable and stimulating.

Teacher-student interactions are essential for increasing student engagement. Students are more motivated to learn when they feel supported and cared through their teachers. Therefore, strong interactions establish the feeling of belonging and provide students secure environment. Ibrahim and El Zaatari (2020) defined engagement as "the amount of time and effort that the students linked to desired outcomes with the help of scientific means, as well as, what the schools do to encourage students for their participation in such events". To put it another way, students' involvement in their inclusive school learning is directly proportionate to the success of school teacher's leadership styles in meeting students' expectations.

Research on transformational leadership style
Ibrahim and El Zaatari (2020), defined leadership as the skill of convincing and leading others towards a common goal. The technique of harnessing power to inspire, encourage, and drive individuals or groups towards certain goals (Purwanto, 2022). At its foundation, leadership is about an individual's effect on others, the encouragement of collaboration, and the successful navigation of problems in the pursuit of a larger goal. One of the most essential parts of leadership is the notion of leadership styles. These styles are contained in many approaches and behaviours that leaders use while communicating with the followers. Transformative leadership involves appealing to followers' higher aspirations and values to inspire and motivate them (Murphy, 2020). This sort of leadership inspires and motivates its followers. Transformational leaders communicates a compelling vision, instilled passion, and promotes creativity, all of these help to foster a sense of group purpose and devotion. The transactional leadership style emphasizes specified structures and procedures, with a special focus on efficiency and the achievement of set objectives (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). Transactional leaders employ a system of rewards and sanctions to encourage their followers. On the opposite extreme, laissez-faire leadership style is characterized by a hands-off approach in that leaders grant their team members a high degree of autonomy (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020; Purwanto, 2022). However, the researcher experimentally analyses transformational leadership in the context of inclusive school learning.

Research on Mediating effect Student expectations
A dearth of empirical research on the subject belies the comprehensiveness of theory of social determination (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020), as a theoretical framework for characterizing students' expectations. Academic students' expectations and transformational leadership style

are the main topics of most of the current study under consideration. Across all subject areas, prior research has demonstrated that pedagogical interventions can help in raising students' expectations. Huyer et al., (2020) found that students' expectations and performance can be greatly improved by the strategic use of students' engagement through inclusive schooling. Students' ability to learn and remember new material is highly dependent on their level of motivation and involvement. Students are more inclined to inquire, investigate, and strive for a more profound comprehension when seeming enthusiastic and hold themselves to high standards. Their levels of motivation and engagement, which are influenced by instructional approaches, might also be affected by their expectations. Educational strategies can also have an impact on students' motivation and engagement.

Student engagement and Transformational leadership
Transformational leaders possess the ability to significantly impact the trust, satisfaction, and performance of their followers through their attunement to the requirements of team members and the work environment at large level. Scholars have recently made modifications and adaptations to transformational leadership from an educational standpoint, with the aim of fostering the growth of self-esteem, admiration, and relationships among students, thereby surpassing their expectations regarding inclusivity (Mbua, 2023). Inclusive classroom environments may benefit from leaders teachers with transformational qualities, as research indicates that such leaders can affect students' perceptions of engagement (Reid, 2023). Therefore, researchers contend that in inclusive classroom learning, teachers transformational leadership may affect students' engagement with learning activities. Initially, a transformational teachers effectively communicate as well as elucidates motivational learning objectives to the students. This entails utilizing appropriate learning materials and encouraging the exchange of personal experiences, all of which serve to foster students' cognitive involvement and enhance their comprehension (Heilporn et al., 2021). Furthermore, an instructor who adopts a transformational stance impacts students through the cultivation of mutual fondness and the demonstration of emotional sensitivity, thereby appealing to their sentiments and encouraging heightened emotional involvement (Hazzam et al., 2023). A transformational teacher has the capacity to inspire students to fulfil assignments and adhere to the regulations of an inclusive classroom setting through the skillful expression of the significance of their contributions, the cultivation of mutual respect, and the acknowledgment of their abilities and skills (Bailey, 2021).

Prior research has underscored the significance of teachers leadership in fostering active participation from students during inclusive classroom learning activities (Gibson & Ewing, 2020). Shin et al. (2021) suggested that transformational teachers have the potential to augment the learning experience and foster student engagement through the elicitation of emotions and exertion of effort. Students' emotional engagement is stimulated as transformational teachers ascertain the optimal means of utilizing emotion to facilitate learning (Bowden et al., 2022). Ibrahim et al., (2020) found transformational leader teachers exhibit emotive and motivating displays, showcasing a fervent dedication to education and knowledge acquisition. Such conduct has the potential to elicit emotional investment and pique students' interest. Additionally, a transformational teacher leader cultivates to active learning through students' capabilities acknowledgment and exploiting opportunities to inspire engagement and task completion (Hazzam et al., 2023; Malokani et al., 2022). Therefore, researchers postulate that:

H.1: Transformational leadership has positive impact on students' engagement

Student expectation and Student engagement

Expectations pertain to perceived disparity between the one that is expected and another that is actually delivered (Rotar, 2022). Student expectations mostly lead to validation, strong connection, or active engagement. The research has firmly established the connection between expectations and engagement both the variables (Krämer et al., 2021). Furthermore, student expectations underscore the need of establishing realistic and demanding goals for students, which in turn enhances their motivation and passion for learning. The student's expectations vary greatly, but their involvement is influenced by their prior experience with inclusive education. For instance, students being enrolled in schools without expecting to actively engage with academic staff and peers leads to lower behavioral engagement. Students that have optimistic academic expectations, such as anticipated grades, study hours, motivation, and intellectual stimulation, are more likely to have improved cognitive abilities (Tam et al., 2021). Perseverance in the face of difficult academic assignments leads to a shift in expectations. Surpassing students' expectations is likely to elicit intense emotional involvement, since good emotions foster enthusiasm, heightened connections (Krämer et al., 2021). In contrast, when students feel isolated and lonely, it might discourage their desire to participate in social activities, since they view future attempts at social integration as insincere and unproductive (Huyer et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to align expectations with students' school experiences to foster significant levels of behavioral, social, cognitive, and affective involvement (Malokani et al., 2023; Adi Badiozaman et al., 2020). Thus, the hypothesis is:

H2: Student expectation has positive impact on student engagement

Student expectation as mediator

Students deeply immersed in academic learning have elevated expectations and are more inclined to sustain their engagement in studies. Based on SDT (Self-Determination Theory), the hypothesis, Adi Badiozaman et al., (2020), expressed that, students having exhibited high levels of engagement and motivation had demonstrated greater inclination towards embracing novel teaching approaches. On other hand, deficiency in motivation might result in the lack of interest for acquiring knowledge and less excitement for teaching techniques on a smaller scale. Hence, it is necessary for educators and policymakers to comprehend significance of student involvement, in order to develop efficacious tactics and interventions that can foster favorable learning milieu. Student involvement is impacted by social interactions, making it crucial for educators and policymakers to possess knowledge and understanding in this domain (Salas-Pilco et al., 2022). Moreover, expectations of students might have an impact on the way, the teachers approach their teaching methods. Students with elevated expectations anticipate that teachers at inclusive schools would embrace student-centered pedagogical approaches, whereas lower expectations may result in the use of more conventional teaching methods. Hence, establishing an interactive educational setting crucial for fostering students' involvement, hence resulting in enhanced academic achievements. Hence researchers formulated the hypothesis:

H3: Student expectation environment has the mediating influence on transformational leader and student engagement
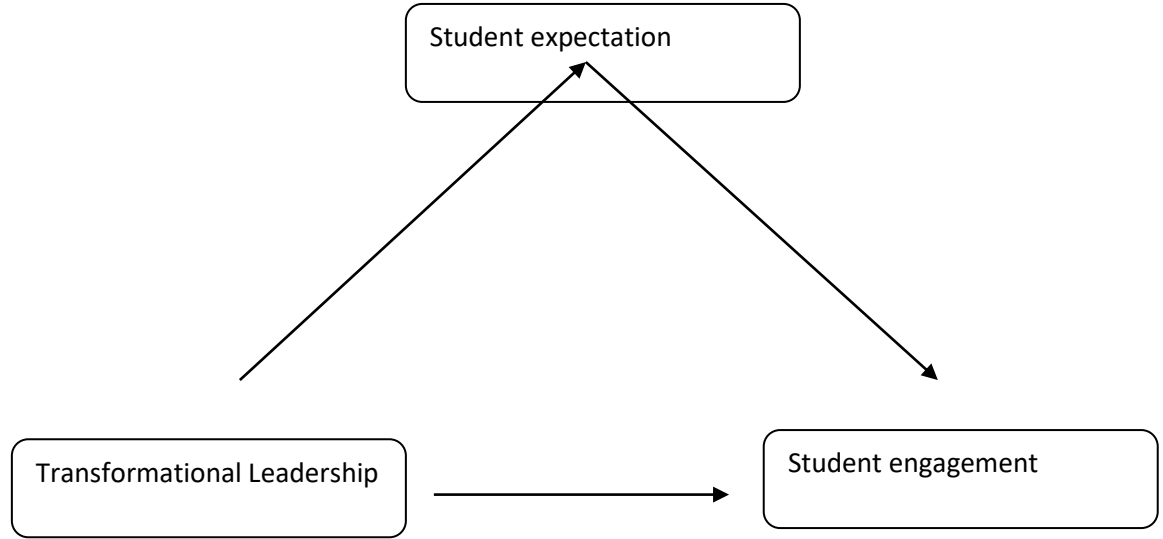
Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research methods

Collecting data and sample

Sample comprising 240 school staff members from Pakistan, including 130 females (54.16%) and 110 men, (45.83%). Mainly 85.8% of the participants were under the age of 45 years. The questionnaire was disseminated in late 2023 by HR specialists from participating organizations. Initially, researchers reached out to organizations in order to obtain permission and elucidate the project's objectives and extent to the Human Resources department of each organization, guaranteeing secrecy and voluntary involvement. Subsequently, the questionnaire could be conveniently accessible via an email dispatched to all personnel inside the organizations, urging diligently for completing these questionnaires online. Survey consisted of 25 items that assessed transformational leadership, student involvement, student expectations, and demographic variables like age, gender, and experience. The response rate was 71.66% with 300 questionnaires sent and 240 completed.

Table 1: Demographics variables

Items	Frequency	%
Gender- Female	130	54.16
Male	110	45.83
Age-15-25	78	32.50
26-35	72	30.00

36-45	56	23.33
46 more	34	14.17
Tenure-1>	92	38.33
1-4	88	36.67
5<	45	18.75

Measurement items

The transformative leadership scale developed by Rafferty and Gryphon (2004) was employed for the current study. The15 items included sample items like, "My leader goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group." Cronbach alpha recorded 0.78. Inclusive school student engagement also has four measurement items, engagement scales for school students (Martin et al., 2012). Sample item like "My teachers are there for me, when I need them" and Cronbach alpha is 0.81. The mediator, Student expectation, comprised six measurement items; the measurement items were adapted from Hornstra et al. (2018). Example items include My experience with digital books was better than expected, with a Cronbach alpha close to 0.79.

Data Analysis

Using Amos version 25, SEM were used to evaluate the hypotheses (Kline, 2023). Using CFA, first examined measurement model fit before testing the proposed model. We eliminated missing values and looked for multivariate normalcy and outliers before fitting the structural models. Skewedness absolute values ought to be less than 2. After adding up and averaging the item scores, a composite score is produced for each component's subdimension. This is intended to gauge the degree of student expectations, student involvement, and transformative leadership (Kline, 2023). As advised by Hair (2013), the transformational leadership scale's vision indicator was eliminated from our analysis due to non-significant loadings. A two-step modelling technique, Anderson and Gerbing (1988), recommendations utilized. Initially, measurement model's fit was assessed. Because model includes three latent variables, it met the conditions and may be estimated (Kline, 2023). Next, as seen in Fig. 1, assessed the structural model's fit (Kline, 2023). To test the mediating hypothesis, looked for a substantial difference among model fit. Next, mediation requirements put out by Hayes (2013). Hayes (2013) states that other metrics such as c2/df, RMSEA, GFI, TLI, and CFI were also employed to assess model fit.

Hypothesis Testing

First, A two-factor model was tested, where the only predictor of student engagement was transformational leadership. The result showed poor fit model (RMSEA=.14, x2/df=5.39, CFI=.87, TLI=.80, GFI=.88). Figure 2 depicts 2nd-model, which investigated the mediating role of student expectations among transformative leadership and student engagement. The impacts of each of a route's important coefficients match expectations. Hypothesized mediating model matched data well (x2=143.61; GFI=.93, RMSEA=.06, x2/df=1.97, CFI=.97, TLI=.95) and all met model fit requirements. The model satisfied all hypotheses. H1 projected a positive, directed link between transformative leadership and student

engagement. As predicted, H2 was also approved, and there is a substantial association between student anticipation and student participation, supporting H1 and H2, respectively.

Student expectation

a` =.69**   b=.34**

c` =.38**

Transformational Leadership   Student engagement
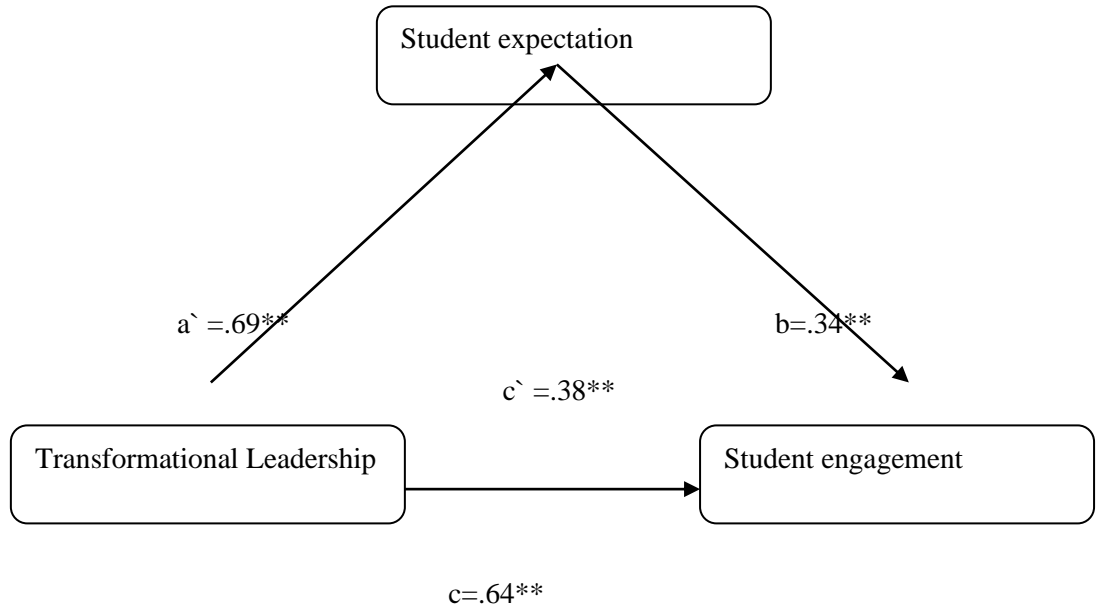
c=.64**

Figure 2. Mediation impact

Using the bootstrap approximation, which was created by generating bias-corrected CI (99%), researchers investigated the indirect impact that was formed among independent variable and, dependent variable through mediator. This was done in order to test Hypothesis number three claiming the mediation. The link between transformative leadership and student engagement was initially investigated, and then a mediator and two other paths were also considered (Hayes, 2013). At a significance threshold of .001 (B=.64), this association was found to be substantially different from zero. When the mediator was introduced, the path x that is depicted in figure 2 was decreased to c'; yet, it continued to be statistically significant throughout the process (b=.38, p<.001). For the convenience, the breakdown of indirect, direct, and total impacts is presented in Table 2. In light of these findings, transformative leadership influence on employee engagement is somewhat mediating by employee expectations.

Table 2. Indirect, direct, total effect

Effect	Direct	Indirect	Total

TL-SE	.69		
TL-SN	.8	.24**	.62**
SE-SN	.34		

The student expectations performed as a mediator and to offer some insights into the dynamic relationships that exists between transformative leadership and student engagement. A data collection consisting of 240 workers from inclusive schools in Pakistan was used to evaluate and provide widespread support for the study paradigm that was suggested. In addition, the results of this investigation revealed that TL and employee expectations could be major predictors of employee involvement in inclusive schooling system, which is in line with findings of other studies (Eliophotou Menon et al., 2021). Our hypothesis is supported by the fact that there is a positive correlation between TL and employee expectations, and hence, employee engagement, and particularly, the expectation of employees served partial mediator in the beneficial relationship that existed among TL and engagement of employees. As a result, having strong transformational leadership talents has the implications of increasing student involvement, which in turn leads to satisfying student expectations. In addition, the findings would be useful with respect to human resources, managers, and the employees of service organizations in their efforts to improve significant teacher training programs, which would in turn improve involvement in inclusive education.

Furthermore, the relevance of establishing a connection between transformative leadership and employee engagement is to meet the expectations of students. It is clear from this that staff are feeling somewhat engaged, and that students are meeting their expectations. There was also a correlation between these findings and earlier research (Silvola et al., 2021). The fact that this is the case demonstrates that transformational leadership is an efficient method for enhancing staff engagement and achieving the expectations of students. The benefits that transformational leadership has on employee engagement can assist organizations in achieving competitive edge.

According to Wang et al. (2020) 's research, the relevance of the study resides in the fact that it investigates the influence of student expectations as a mediator in the link between transformative leadership and student engagement.

It is possible for educators to obtain insight into the way, how transformational leadership may be employed more effectively to improve student engagement by analyzing the mediating influence of student expectation. This is similar to the findings of earlier research (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020). It is more probable that employees will be extremely enthusiastic, devoted, and interested in their job when transformational leaders offer access to resources, information, feedback, and chances for learning and growth. This may be accomplished by first gaining a grasp of the students' expectations and motivations, and then

developing a transformational leadership strategy that caters to the individual requirements of the students. On top of that, educators may gain vital information into how to encourage students and create better engagement by gaining knowledge of the mediating influence that student expectation.

Study implication
There is a possibility that the outcomes of the empirical inquiry will provide important implications. Students indicated significant engagement for transformational leadership was present, despite the fact that the economic environment was characterized by increased flexibility, high technology, and organizational instability. It is possible that inclusive school leadership initiatives, which involve transformational leadership development and student empowerment, might prove beneficial in enhancing student engagement. The use of educational activities that foster the growth of student's learning. According to Ibrahim et al.'s research from 2020, the development of transformational leaders is just the first stage in the process of generating as well as improving employees working conditions that encourage organizational change by means of inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individual care, and intellectual stimulation. The school ought to make an investment in the production of transformational leaders by means of a comprehensive training approach. Earlier research conducted by Salas-Pilco et al. (2022) and Heilporn et al. (2021) confirmed training is considered to be advantageous.

In addition, considering that the majority of the school is comprised of enterprises, without having a doubt is beneficial in exploring the ways in which leaders in schools with a structure that is less hierarchical and empower their students. According to Salas-Pilco et al. (2022), it is of utmost importance to encourage and strengthen the role of the leader in fostering passion in employees. This may be accomplished by engaging in discussions that are inspiring, conveying good messages about the school that make people proud to be a part of the school, and engaging in active listening. There are a number of other crucial elements, including extensive two-way interaction and information transfer, which may be easily performed when teacher leaders are more approachable. Waltz et al.'s research from 2020 suggests that the creation of good job engagement is dependent on the use of communication strategies that are both effective and open. As a consequence of this, inclusive school administration should take measures to rethink occupations, and organizations should make the construction of inventive environments a priority. Findings highlight need of having competent human resource management, which should design strategies that strengthen intangible motivators in order to boost levels of job engagement.

According to Adi Badiozaman et al., (2020) study, school administrators should identify good work, commend staff for the achievements, and thank them for the efforts (personal recognition). Such controllers should also enable suitable resources and growth opportunities, provide frequent formal or informal feedback (support), and promote strong social relationships and an environment of trust and teamwork by offering emotional support, help, or information. Furthermore, if workers perceive that they do not have sufficient knowledge, help, or resources, they have the ability to develop resources for themselves as to resolve the issues, for instance, soliciting feedback (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). All of these repercussions have the potential to contribute to increased levels of student empowerment and student engagement in teaching and learning environments that are inclusive.

Limitation and future direction

Several constraints must be addressed in this research. Since employed self-report questionnaires to quantify all parameters based on employees' views, typical method bias is a major restriction (Avolio et al., 1991). CFA revealed model matched data well, but researchers used single-factor Harman's test to examine validity and common method bias. Constraining CFA to one-factor and studying unrotated solutions examines, if a single component explains most of the variation. The single component did not explain most of the variance, therefore common technique bias not an issue. When gathering data, future research must consider leaders' perspectives. Despite adopting theoretical frameworks that clearly support our assumptions, the recommendation for longitudinal designs related to causal inferences regarding student involvement and studying fluctuations over time (Pachler et al., 2019). State student involvement rather than trait engagement can be studied to understand within-student variations (Johar et al., 2023). Another disadvantage is that this study did not evaluate psychological contract type.

Hammouri et al. (2022) defined psychological contract 'individual views, moulded by the organization, regarding the parameters of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization' as shown on (p.62). When workers believe their employer fulfils its commitments, they are more engaged at work. Future study should explore, how psychological contract breaks down or fulfilment moderates student empowerment and engagement. Only inclusive schooling data were used, which may restrict generalizability. To accommodate for varying situations, the researchers encourage future research into the interaction of such groups for various sectors and countries with differing cultures and power distances.

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