

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S MANAGEMENT STYLE AND TEACHERS' WORK MOTIVATION^{††}

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Abstract

The effectiveness of the school system largely depends on the principal's management style and its impact on teachers' work motivation. With the rapid changes in the educational sphere, school leaders must adapt their leadership approaches to maintain teachers' engagement, job satisfaction, and motivation. This study investigates the relationship between school principals' management styles and teachers' motivation, highlighting how various styles—authoritarian, democratic, and liberal—influence the level of motivation among teachers. The research was conducted across four schools in Armenia, utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys and interviews. The findings indicate that teachers under democratic leadership exhibit higher creative motivation, while those under authoritarian leadership show lower intrinsic motivation but stronger compliance. The study contributes to the understanding of educational leadership psychology and provides practical recommendations for school management. This study empirically examines the correlation between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation, providing statistical validation of this relationship. Unlike predominantly theoretical studies, it integrates psychological assessment tools to ensure systematic analysis. The findings highlight leadership-motivation patterns and propose a hybrid leadership model for optimizing teacher engagement and job satisfaction.

Keywords: management style, school principal, work motivation, teacher motivation, leadership in education.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping work motivation, influencing employees' attitudes, engagement, and overall productivity. The correlation between leadership and motivation has been the subject of extensive research, with scholars exploring various psychological and managerial approaches to understanding their interaction.

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While leadership theories and their impact on employee motivation have been widely explored in corporate settings, their application to the educational sector remains under-researched. Existing studies primarily focus on theoretical discussions, lacking empirical validation. This research addresses this gap by providing statistical evidence on the relationship between school leadership styles and teachers' motivation, integrating psychological assessment tools to ensure objective analysis. The study's findings challenge conventional assumptions about leadership efficiency in schools and propose a more flexible, hybrid leadership model that balances structure and participation.

Kurt Lewin (1939) identified three fundamental leadership styles: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. Each of these styles has a distinct effect on employee motivation and workplace efficiency. Authoritarian leadership, characterized by strict control and centralized decision-making, has been associated with lower intrinsic motivation due to the suppression of autonomy and creativity (Lewin, 1939). However, Herzberg's two-factor theory suggests that such leadership primarily affects hygiene factors—salary, job security, and working conditions—rather than key motivators such as achievement and recognition (Herzberg, 1959).

Democratic leadership, on the other hand, fosters participation and employee involvement in decision-making. Douglas McGregor (1957), in his Theory Y, highlights that employees naturally seek responsibility and personal growth when provided with autonomy, leading to increased motivation and higher engagement (McGregor, 1957). Maslow's hierarchy of needs also supports this view, emphasizing that democratic leadership satisfies employees' higher-order needs, such as self-actualization and belonging (Maslow, 1954).

Laissez-faire leadership, which minimizes managerial intervention, is often effective in teams with highly skilled and self-motivated individuals. However, in settings where employees require guidance, it may lead to a lack of direction and lower engagement (Stogdill, 1974).

The relationship between leadership and motivation has also been explored through various motivational theories. McClelland's Theory of Needs suggests that employees are driven by achievement, affiliation, and power, with different leadership styles fulfilling these needs in different ways (McClelland, 1961). Democratic leadership aligns with achievement and affiliation, while authoritarian leadership tends to cater to the need for power.

In different organizational contexts, leadership styles produce varying motivational effects. Research suggests that democratic leadership is most effective in stable environments, fostering innovation and long-term commitment, whereas authoritarian leadership becomes necessary in crisis situations, ensuring quick decision-making and stability (Fiedler, 1967).

In recent years, leadership studies have expanded beyond traditional models to include transformational and adaptive leadership approaches. Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) emphasizes inspiring and motivating employees through shared vision and personal development. In the educational context, transformational leaders create innovative environments, support teacher professional growth, and enhance job satisfaction. Recent studies confirm that such leadership styles positively influence both teacher motivation and student outcomes.

Similarly, adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 2009) highlights the importance of flexibility in addressing complex and changing challenges. In schools, adaptive leaders help teachers navigate reforms, implement new pedagogical strategies, and adjust to student needs, leading to increased motivation and professional fulfillment.

These findings are consistent with recent international research highlighting the positive impact of participatory leadership on teacher well-being and professional engagement (e.g., Leithwood & Sun, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, the observed dissatisfaction with financial rewards under democratic leadership reflects global trends, where intrinsic motivation increases with autonomy, but extrinsic dissatisfaction persists in underfunded systems (OECD, 2020). This alignment with global patterns strengthens the relevance of the current study and its implications for broader educational reforms.

Moreover, hybrid leadership models have gained recognition for their ability to combine elements of various leadership styles to optimize school management. Research indicates that school principals who integrate authoritarian structure with democratic participation achieve higher engagement and efficiency among teachers (Smith & Bell, 2021). This study builds upon these frameworks, contributing insights into how a hybrid leadership model can foster teacher motivation in Armenian schools.

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical exploration of how different leadership styles are linked to specific types of teacher motivation, including creative, collective, and power-related motives. While previous research has often generalized the impact of leadership on motivation, this study distinguishes between motivational drivers and identifies how each is influenced by authoritarian and democratic management styles in Armenian schools. The focus on nuanced motivational patterns adds depth to the current literature and fills a significant gap in localized empirical studies.

The effectiveness of leadership styles in work motivation highlights the necessity of adaptability in managerial approaches. Future research should focus on hybrid leadership models that integrate elements of different styles to enhance motivation, productivity, and overall workplace well-being.

METHODOLOGY

As a result of the analysis of scientific literature, it becomes evident that the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation is a significant factor in educational management. The article presents a quantitative study conducted in four schools, involving 60 teachers and their principals.

In the Republic of Armenia, psychological and educational research that does not involve medical procedures or risk to participants' health does not require formal approval from an ethics committee. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in full compliance with the ethical standards outlined in the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activity (Article 24), ensuring voluntary participation, anonymity, and the use of data solely for academic purposes.

For the study, we selected several diagnostic methods, including S. Solovyov's "Assessment of Personal Motivation", V.B. Zakharova and A.L. Zhuravlev's "Determination of Leadership Style", and N.P. Fetiskin's "Leadership Style Self-Assessment" methodology.

While international tools such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 1995) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) are widely used in leadership research, they have certain limitations within the Armenian educational context:

MLQ and SDT were developed in Western settings and require adaptation to the hierarchical structure and leadership perceptions in Armenian schools. MLQ is predominantly used in business and corporate environments, whereas the selected methodologies are tailored to educational institutions. The chosen diagnostic tools are already validated within educational research in post-Soviet countries, ensuring a more accurate reflection of leadership and motivation factors in Armenian schools.

Thus, these methodologies provide a contextually relevant and scientifically valid approach to understanding school leadership styles and teacher motivation in the Armenian educational setting.

The research was conducted in A. Navasardyan High School No. 196, Raffi High School No. 36, D. Hovsepyan High School No. 191, and A. Blok High School No. 122.

To ensure validity, the study was carried out in three stages:

1. Preparation stage – defining the relevance of the research, formulating objectives, conducting a theoretical analysis, and selecting appropriate methods.
2. Main stage – implementing the study, where teachers and principals were surveyed, and observational methods were applied.

3. Final stage – analyzing the collected data and formulating conclusions.

Participants were informed about the research procedure, ensured anonymity, and were notified that the collected data would be used solely for academic purposes.

Additionally, the interview method was used to explore teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership style and how it influences their work motivation. This helped determine whether different leadership approaches create varying levels of job satisfaction, professional creativity, and motivation.

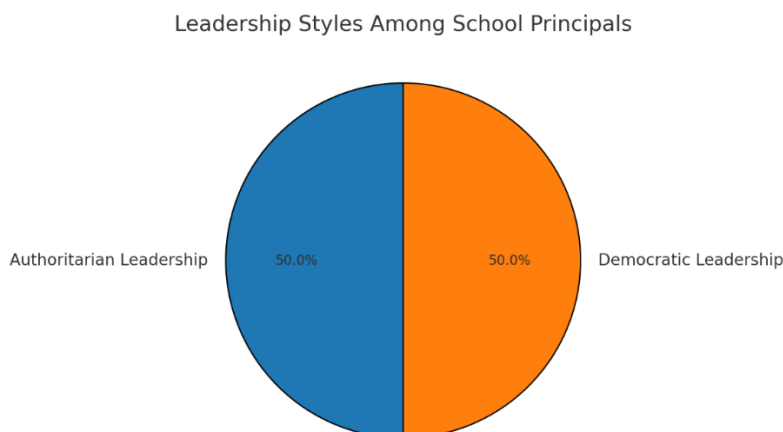
DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The study utilized V.B. Zakharova and A.L. Zhuravlev's "Leadership Style Determination" methodology, N.P. Fetiskin's "Leadership Style Self-Assessment" methodology, and S. Solovyov's "Personal Work Motivation Assessment" methodology to examine the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' work motivation. A total of 60 teachers and 4 school principals participated in the study, with two demonstrating an authoritarian leadership style and two employing a democratic leadership style.

Analysis of leadership styles revealed that:

- 50% of the school principals exhibited an authoritarian leadership style, characterized by centralized decision-making, strict hierarchical structures, and limited teacher autonomy.
- 50% of the school principals displayed a democratic leadership style, which emphasized collaboration, participatory decision-making, and open communication.

Figure 1



These classifications were validated through teacher evaluations, confirming that educators largely perceived their principals' leadership styles in alignment with the principals' self-assessments.

Impact of Leadership Style on Teacher Motivation

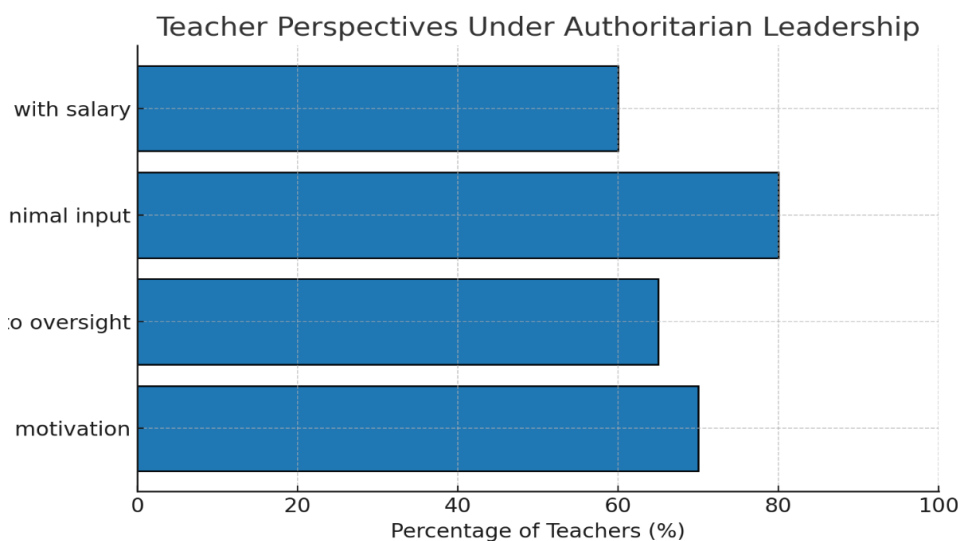
To assess how leadership styles influenced teachers' motivation, the study measured six key motivational factors using S. Solovyov's methodology:

1. Work (intrinsic satisfaction derived from professional responsibilities)
2. Profession (dedication to the teaching field)
3. Salary (financial incentives and compensation)
4. Creativity (opportunities for professional innovation)
5. Team (collegial relationships and workplace environment)
6. Power (aspiration for authority and leadership roles)

The results demonstrated distinct motivational patterns among teachers depending on their principal's leadership style:

- Teachers under authoritarian leadership:
- 70% reported that job security and stability were their primary motivational factors rather than professional fulfillment.
- 65% felt limited in their ability to engage in creative teaching practices, citing strict oversight and hierarchical restrictions.
- 80% indicated that decision-making was centralized, with minimal opportunities for teacher input.
- 60% expressed moderate dissatisfaction with their salaries, yet financial security remained a primary motivating factor.

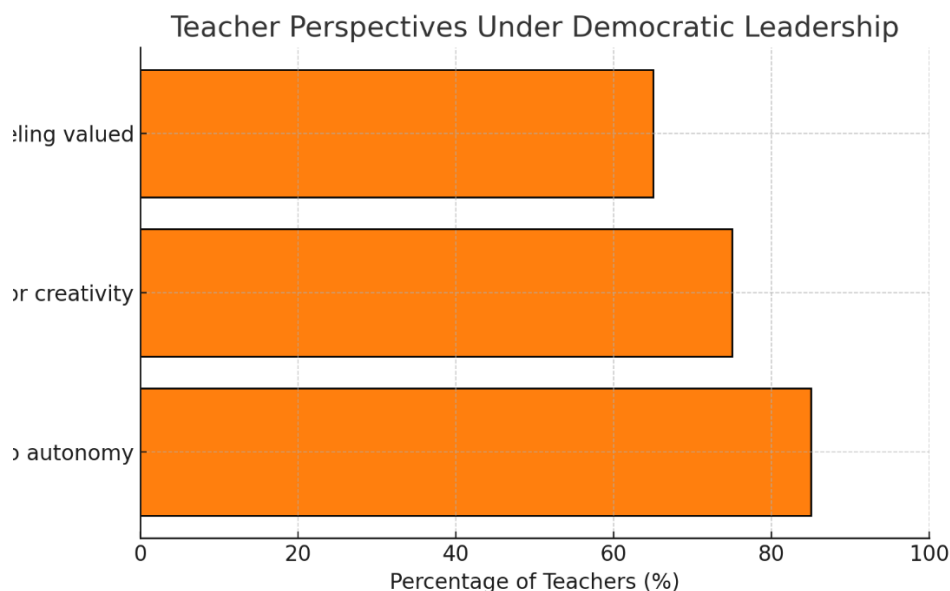
Figure 2



Teachers under democratic leadership:

- 85% experienced higher job satisfaction, attributing this to increased autonomy and participation in school decision-making.
- 75% exhibited stronger motivation for creativity, as they were encouraged to implement innovative teaching methods.
- 65% reported dissatisfaction with their salaries, indicating that although they felt professionally valued, their financial compensation did not adequately reflect their contributions.

Figure 3

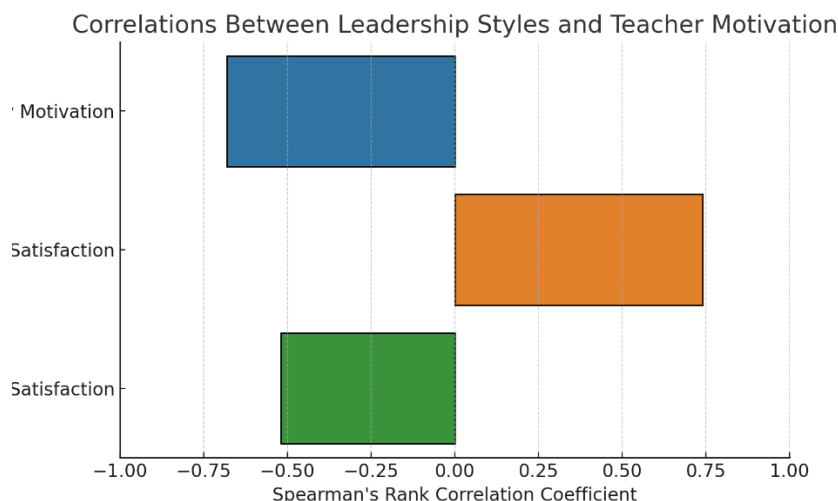


Statistical Analysis of Correlations

To further investigate the relationship between leadership style and teacher motivation, a Spearman's rank correlation analysis was conducted. The findings indicate:

- A negative correlation (-0.68 , $p < 0.05$, $n=30$) between authoritarian leadership and creativity motivation, suggesting that rigid hierarchical structures constrain teachers' capacity for innovation.
- A positive correlation ($+0.74$, $p < 0.01$, $n=30$) between democratic leadership and job satisfaction, indicating that inclusive decision-making and teacher autonomy significantly enhance motivation.
- A moderate negative correlation (-0.52 , $p < 0.05$, $n=30$) between democratic leadership and salary satisfaction, suggesting that while teachers under democratic leadership are more engaged in their work, they are also more likely to express concerns regarding financial compensation.

Figure 4



These results align with prior research on the role of leadership styles in shaping workplace motivation . The findings further emphasize that while authoritarian leadership ensures structured discipline, it may reduce intrinsic motivation for professional growth, whereas democratic leadership fosters engagement but does not necessarily address financial dissatisfaction among teachers.

Democratic leadership in schools:

Encourages teachers to implement innovative teaching methods. Fosters a collaborative and trust-based environment, reducing fear of taking initiative. Strengthens teachers' sense of professional value, which enhances non-material motivation. No direct link between autonomy and financial rewards – Teachers may feel empowered but still lack financial incentives that reflect their contribution.

Higher expectations for fair resource distribution – Increased involvement in decision-making makes salary disparities more noticeable and frustrating.

Comparative assessment effect – Democratic environments encourage open discussions, which may heighten teachers' awareness of financial inequalities within the system.

However, despite its positive impact on creativity, democratic leadership does not resolve salary dissatisfaction ($r = -0.52, p < 0.05$). Several factors contribute to this:

1. No direct link between autonomy and financial rewards – Teachers may feel empowered but still lack financial incentives that reflect their contribution.
2. Higher expectations for fair resource distribution – Increased involvement in decision-making makes salary disparities more noticeable and frustrating.
3. Comparative assessment effect – Democratic environments encourage open discussions, which may heighten teachers' awareness of financial inequalities within the system.

Implications for Educational Leadership

The study underscores the critical role of leadership style in fostering a productive and motivated teaching workforce. The authoritarian model, while effective in maintaining order, may restrict creativity and professional autonomy, leading to lower engagement and innovation. Conversely, democratic leadership encourages participation and enhances job satisfaction, yet financial concerns remain a key issue for teachers. To further examine the impact of leadership styles on teacher motivation, an independent t-test was conducted on a sample of 60 teachers, divided into two groups based on their school principal's leadership style (authoritarian vs. democratic). The results revealed statistically significant differences in overall motivation ($p > 0.05$, $n = 60$), collective motivation, and creative motivation, indicating that teachers under democratic leadership report significantly higher motivation levels in all three categories compared to those under authoritarian leadership.

Although more advanced statistical techniques such as ANOVA are often used in educational research, they are primarily designed for comparing three or more groups. In this study, since the sample was divided into only two groups based on leadership style (authoritarian vs. democratic), an independent t-test was applied as the most appropriate method for assessing differences in motivation levels.

As demonstrated in the table, democratic leadership has a particularly strong effect on creative motivation, with teachers in this environment engaging more actively in innovative teaching methods and professional self-development. Similarly, collective motivation is notably higher, as teachers report feeling a greater sense of teamwork, shared responsibility, and collaboration. The results further confirm that overall motivation is significantly stronger among teachers who experience greater autonomy and participation in decision-making. See Table 1 for a detailed comparison of motivation scores.

Table 1. T-test Comparison of Teacher Motivation under Democratic and Authoritarian Leadership Styles

	Overall Motivation Level	Work	Profession	Salary	Creativity	Collective	Power
Democratic	51,47	60,17	61,93	25,87	55,47	58,67	39,87
Standard Deviation	193,291954	162,9022989	143,0988506	120,5333333	234,4643678	95,54022989	254,0505747
Authoritarian	41,83	62,13	64,23	26,03	46,70	51,23	39,90
Standard Deviation	142,9712644	135,9126437	125,3574713	120,8609195	128,2172414	162,3229885	290,7827586

t test	2,877382068	0,623146599	0,768867751	0,058755147	2,521345459	2,535417808	0,007821815
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Why Do These Differences Occur?

1. Higher Sense of Autonomy – Democratic leadership grants teachers more decision-making power, allowing them to experiment with new teaching strategies and methodologies, which directly enhances their intrinsic, collective, and creative motivation.
2. Supportive and Collaborative Culture – Schools with democratic leadership styles foster peer-to-peer collaboration, leading to a stronger sense of team cohesion and collective engagement.
3. Encouragement of Creativity – Unlike authoritarian leadership, which often prioritizes control and structure, democratic leaders actively encourage teachers to innovate in their pedagogical approaches, increasing both professional enthusiasm and motivation.
4. Emotional Well-being – Teachers in democratic environments experience less stress and greater job satisfaction, as they perceive their contributions as recognized, valued, and impactful.

Implications for Educational Management

The findings suggest that democratic leadership fosters a stronger, more engaged, and creative teaching workforce, significantly outperforming authoritarian leadership in all key motivation indicators. The table illustrates these differences, further emphasizing how leadership style shapes teacher engagement and satisfaction.

Given these results, future educational policies should prioritize leadership approaches that promote collaboration, creativity, and shared decision-making, ensuring that teachers feel both supported and professionally fulfilled.

Hybrid leadership in educational institutions integrates elements of both authoritarian and democratic leadership styles to create a dynamic and responsive management approach that fosters teacher motivation and institutional effectiveness. A key component of this model is the balance of structure and autonomy, which establishes clear guidelines and expectations while simultaneously granting teachers the flexibility to implement instructional methods that align with their expertise and pedagogical philosophy. This approach ensures that administrative control is maintained without suppressing creativity, allowing educators to develop innovative teaching strategies while adhering to institutional objectives.

Another critical aspect is individualized motivation strategies, which involve the implementation of personalized incentive programs designed to address both financial and professional growth needs. These programs include salary bonuses, career development opportunities, and public recognition of achievements, all of which contribute to fostering a sense of

accomplishment and long-term engagement among teachers. By acknowledging and rewarding individual contributions, educational institutions can enhance job satisfaction and encourage continuous professional development.

Flexible decision-making is another essential pillar of hybrid leadership, allowing school administrators to adapt their management style based on situational demands. In crisis situations requiring immediate action, an authoritarian approach ensures rapid and effective decision-making, whereas in long-term school development initiatives, a democratic process is encouraged, actively involving teachers in curriculum design, strategic planning, and policy formation. This adaptability enables school leaders to balance stability with innovation, ensuring both organizational efficiency and professional fulfillment among educators.

Furthermore, active teacher involvement in school governance is a fundamental component of hybrid leadership, fostering a collaborative educational environment where teachers have a voice in decision-making processes. The establishment of teacher councils facilitates participation in discussions related to pedagogical innovations and resource allocation, thereby reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility. By empowering educators to contribute to school management, hybrid leadership promotes a sense of professional autonomy and engagement, ultimately strengthening institutional cohesion and effectiveness.

The practical implementation of this leadership model includes the creation of advisory committees where teachers play an integral role in shaping school policies and management strategies. Maintaining a balance between autonomy for experienced educators and structured supervision where necessary ensures that both creativity and accountability are upheld. Additionally, the development of a performance-based reward system that combines financial incentives with opportunities for professional advancement serves to reinforce motivation and long-term job satisfaction.

By integrating these principles, hybrid leadership enhances teacher motivation, engagement, and overall job satisfaction, fostering a more adaptive, innovative, and effective educational system that responds to the evolving needs of both educators and students.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize the study's findings. First, the sample was limited to four schools within Yerevan, potentially affecting the generalizability of the results to other regions in Armenia or international contexts. Second, the data collection methods—particularly self-assessment and interviews—may be subject to social desirability bias, especially when evaluating school principals' leadership styles. Third, although the diagnostic tools used are

validated within post-Soviet educational research, they may not fully capture the complexity of leadership dynamics or cultural nuances in Armenian schools.

Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into how changes in leadership style affect teacher motivation over time. Finally, while the study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods, future research could benefit from larger sample sizes and multi-level analysis, including perspectives from students and other stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, after analyzing the theoretical literature and conducting research on the relationship between leadership style and teacher motivation, we come to the following conclusions: Leadership style plays a fundamental role in shaping teachers' professional engagement, job satisfaction, and overall workplace motivation. It determines not only the level of autonomy and creativity allowed in the teaching process but also the emotional and psychological well-being of educators.

The study contributes to the understanding of leadership dynamics in educational institutions by empirically confirming how different leadership styles influence teacher motivation and engagement. The findings reveal that democratic leadership fosters intrinsic motivation and creativity, whereas authoritarian leadership suppresses professional engagement. Additionally, the proposed hybrid leadership model suggests that a balanced approach, integrating structured decision-making with participatory elements, can enhance both motivation and job satisfaction among teachers. These insights provide valuable implications for school management, offering a data-driven perspective on effective leadership strategies in education.

The research findings indicate the following patterns:

- Teachers working under authoritarian leadership exhibit lower creativity motivation due to the rigid hierarchical structure and lack of decision-making opportunities. However, they tend to have higher job security motivation, as stability and structured discipline provide them with a sense of predictability and control.
- Teachers working under democratic leadership demonstrate higher levels of professional engagement and motivation, as they are actively involved in decision-making processes and feel more valued within the institution. At the same time, these teachers report greater dissatisfaction with financial compensation, suggesting that while they feel encouraged to contribute creatively, their efforts are not always adequately rewarded.

The results confirm that leadership style directly affects the motivational drivers of teachers,

with authoritarian leadership ensuring order and stability at the cost of innovation and autonomy, while democratic leadership promotes collaboration and professional growth but may leave financial concerns unaddressed.

Given these findings, it is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to implement leadership strategies that strike a balance between structured management and teacher autonomy. Further studies are recommended to explore long-term effects of leadership style on teacher retention, performance, and overall job satisfaction, as well as the potential role of financial incentives in enhancing teacher motivation across different leadership environments.

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