



Mediating Role of School Climate Between Democratic Leadership Style and Teachers' Professional Commitment

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Abstract

The present study focuses on relationship between democratic leadership style and teachers' professional commitment with mediating role of school climate. The study is based on positivism philosophy. As per the Annual Statistical Report (ASR) 2022, 3106 Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) working in five districts in which 354 SSTs were selected by using stratified sampling method. Yamame's (1967) formula was used to calculate the sample size. A questionnaire was developed for data collection including 12 items related to democratic leadership style, 20 items related to school climate and 18 items related to professional commitment of teachers. Reliability of Democratic Leadership Scale, School climate scale and Teachers' Professional Commitment scale was estimated .764, .870 and .845 respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and mediation analysis was used by applying Hayes (2015) Process Macro. The study's findings indicate that professional commitment and democratic leadership style was found partially mediated by school climate. The study suggested that principals in sample districts may exercise democratic leadership to strengthen the teachers' commitment to their job.

Keywords: Democratic Leadership Style, Professional Commitment, School Climate

1. Introduction

The leadership's role determines whether the organization succeeds or fails. A professional and devoted leader puts in a lot of work and inspires their subordinates to work hard and kindly so that the organization can succeed. Furthermore, the learning environment and teachers' dedication to their jobs have a direct impact on students' academic success. According to Velarde et al. (2020), a competent leader will therefore constantly strive to create a better atmosphere in which teachers can work with all of their hearts and students can study without any difficulties. According to Keetanjaly et al. (2019), leaders have a constructive and good role. They contend that the leadership should handle all of the teachers' issues so they may approach the classroom with a clean slate and engage the children in lively, kind instruction. Teachers who feel valued and encouraged are more likely to think positively and be enthusiastic about what they do; without these qualities, successful teaching and learning cannot occur. Education goals can only be met, in the opinion of Nir and Hameiri (2014), with the active and supportive involvement of leaders. The management and administrative power belongs to a leader. He is therefore able to make optimal use of the resources at his disposal. He or she has the power to inspire and encourage subordinates to collaborate with interest.

Leadership plays an important part in many facets of life. The effectiveness of a leader influences the effectiveness of their followers, claim Dutta and Sahney (2016). A leader can guide their team effectively if they possess the most recent information and adequate leadership abilities. A leader with the necessary training and expertise can guide his or her group and focus them on achievement. Growth can only occur when all workers are directed and motivated in the appropriate path, and this can only happen when the leader fulfills their proper duty. Proficient and lively leadership possesses the ability to consider every aspect of the company. Leaders need to be proactive and dynamic in a multitude of areas inside any organization.

According to studies by Raupu et al. (2021), principal leadership can raise the caliber and effectiveness of teachers. Teacher commitment can be increased and performance can be improved by the leadership of the principal in conjunction with efficient organizational communication. For school principals, a democratic leadership style works best. They execute choices by giving subordinates authority and responsibility, deliberate by involving all aspects by consensus, and evaluate programs in a methodical manner. The democratic leadership typology of the principle is considered a vital virtue by Rohman & Muna (2019). Schools are ready for any challenge and have the capacity to compete in educational contests. The educational, personality, professional, and social abilities of teachers are positively and significantly impacted by democratic leadership styles, according to Raupu et al. (2021).

In secondary schools, the head of the school has both administrative and academic responsibilities. Secondary school heads oversee all aspects of the school's operations, as secondary education plays a crucial role in Pakistan's educational system. They are in charge of organizing the teaching and learning process and creating the school's vision and mission. They are also in charge of creating a supportive school environment. The research raises concerns about how school principals manage the school climate, which affects teachers' effectiveness and

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dedication to their careers. The goal of the current study was to determine the response to this query. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence to support the idea that leadership style plays a mediating role in the relationship between professional dedication and school atmosphere at secondary school level (Awan & Mahmood, 2010). Thus, the goal of the current study was to look at how teachers' professional commitment and the principal democratic leadership style of the school might mediate issues related to school climate. The Kurt Lewin theory of leadership was used in the research. Lewin's Leadership Theory was developed in 1939 when a group of researchers under the direction of psychologist Kurt Lewin set out to identify various leadership philosophies. They distinguished between three well-known leadership philosophies: laissez-faire, democratic, and autocratic (Wheeler, 2008). The objectives of the study were;

- a. To find out the relationship between principals' democratic style and school climate.
- b. To find out the relationship between principals' democratic style and teachers' commitment.
- c. To examine the mediating role of school climate in the relationship between democratic leadership style and teachers' professional commitment.

2. Literature Review

Individuals have varied interpretations of what constitutes "leadership." It is believed that both the leader and the followers have roles to fulfill and that there is a certain type of connection in which mutual cooperation exists. It takes mutual understanding to sustain this partnership. To complete the prescribed task and meet the goals, leaders and subordinates collaborate with one another. Achieving the organization's purpose requires effective communication between executives and employees (Munir & Khalil, 2016).

A person with a variety of personality traits and leadership abilities can function as a true leader, according to Kalshoven et al. (2016). To accomplish the goals, a leader must accept a variety of tasks. It is the leader's duty to enhance the ability of those under him or her so that they function effectively. A leader, according to Erkutlu and Chafra (2015), has a clear understanding of both the nature of the task and the organization's goals in addition to his or her own obligations. In order to accomplish the goals of the company, he or she regularly communicates with subordinates. A successful leader, according to Day et al. (2020), is visionary, vivacious, possesses a variety of personality traits, exhibits remarkable conduct, and possesses a multitude of leadership attributes. He or she is well aware of their duties and understands how to make the most of their subordinates' skills and talents.

Leadership, according to Cogaltay et al. (2016), is a constant and ongoing effort. Both efficiency and expertise were needed. Not everyone has the ability to lead. Not everyone has the ability to lead. Actually, everyone is endowed with certain special talents and skills. A person can lead their subordinate if they possess the necessary leadership abilities. Since leadership is an ongoing and consistent process, each leader must exercise authority to accomplish the goals. A competent and capable leader will always designate the appropriate team members for the task, enabling them to work with fervor and enthusiasm. A leader must set an example for their subordinates and motivate them to be enthusiastic about their work. For this reason, efficient communication and mutual understanding are crucial in order to prevent the climate of mistrust and ambiguity from developing.

2.1. Behavioral Theory of Leadership

This notion holds that a person must develop personal attributes in order to become a leader; leadership is not an innate trait. According to behavioral theories, developing one's personal qualities and receiving the right training are prerequisites for being a leader. To become a successful and effective leader, knowledge and experience are also important. In order to highlight the value of behavioral theories, proponents of this theory identify the shortcomings of the trait theory and list them. The behavioral theory is seen as a universal theory that may be used anywhere and in any circumstance. (Malos, 2012).

According to Labby et al. (2012), the behavioral theory was introduced to explain the leadership attributes after the trait theory failed. From the 1940s through the 1960s, academics and researchers began to study the characteristics of both leaders and non-leaders. They came to the conclusion that characteristics are inner, innate attributes that people cannot learn. Supporters of trait theory had looked into the traits of worldly great persons. They also looked into the innate and inherent skills of those with leadership talents. Supporters of behavior theory contend that becoming a leader requires having the right education, experience, and abilities. This notion holds that anyone may become a leader if they receive the right instruction, training, and education.

2.2. Democratic Leadership

Among the several leadership theories, the Democratic Leadership Style has gained prominence in the modern day. Staff members who are below you are encouraged to participate in decision-making in this manner. Democratic leaders hold their subordinates in the highest regard. In order to accomplish the goals of the company, it is the responsibility of the democratic leader to enthuse and encourage their subordinates. Before making any judgments, the leader confers with his team members and possesses excellent communication abilities. He is considerate of others' viewpoints. He doesn't degrade people and is considerate of their honor and self-respect. A friendly work environment is thus produced, leading to a mutually trusting and understanding setting. For the sake of the organization's well-being, everyone must collaborate (Wang et al., 2022).

A democratic leader that listens well stated by Khan et al. (2015). He addresses his subordinates' difficulties and listens to their thoughts as well as their worries and concerns. This creates an environment where the leader and the staff members may communicate with one another and live in harmony. Consequently, they collaborate in

order to complete the assigned task on time. Like participation leadership, democratic leadership encourages other subordinates to take part in the organization's crucial decisions so that everyone may contribute appropriately to the success of the enterprise.

The Democratic leader makes an effort to utilize the strengths and capabilities of his lower-level employees. He makes appropriate use of every resource available to ensure that the most possible advantage is obtained from it. In order to encourage enthusiasm in his work, he also allocates tasks to his employees based on their qualifications and abilities. Without cooperation and mutual understanding, no achievement is conceivable. Therefore, a democratic leader builds relationships with each person to foster a cooperative environment. In this manner, it is feasible to meet organizational goals as well as enable employee success (Ufua et al., 2020).

Democratic leadership encourages teachers to work together and learn from their mistakes. Teachers can be motivated to work together to accomplish educational goals and enhance their performance in their particular disciplines by being inspired by principal democratic leadership (Raupu et al., 2021). Herosita's (2017) research indicates that teachers' work discipline in schools can be improved by the principal's democratic leadership. Likewise, Raupu et al. (2021) claim that a principal's democratic management has a significant influence on raising teacher and staff performance. According to Cilek (2019), transactional, charismatic, and bureaucratic principle leadership styles have a negative impact on teacher performance in schools, whereas transformational, autocratic, and democratic principal leadership styles have a good impact. Teachers perform far better when they are led in an authoritarian or transactional manner.

2.3. School Climate

Individuals have different definitions of what a school climate is. As a result, there isn't a single definition for it. Thapa et al. (2013) define school climate as the setting in which the teaching and learning process takes place. The success of the kids is positively impacted by the school climate if there is a friendly environment for learning, where teachers and students feel at ease and have no difficulties. If not, this is not the case. The elements that make up the school climate are the teachers, students, curriculum, educational programs, and activities (Wang & Degol, 2016).

As stated by Loukas (2007), social scientists from over fifty years ago believed that the school environment was the school climate. Researchers studying education believe that the commercial and educational environments are comparable. The primary duties of educational leaders were viewed as being nearly identical to those of leaders employed by commercial enterprises. In prior research, teachers' job experiences were linked to the school climate, as reported by Thapa et al. (2013). The author goes on to suggest that there is a direct correlation between the conduct and dispositions of educators and those of their pupils. In other words, students' behavior is shaped by their professors' personalities.

A healthy school atmosphere, according to Loukas (2007), does not allow outside pressure, whether it comes from parents, the community, or any other source. The leaders of these organizations are unique individuals who, depending on the circumstance, employ a variety of leadership philosophies. Their role is to actively foster a friendly environment that facilitates learning and sets the organization up for success. The success of the students is greatly influenced by these organizations, which are led by vibrant individuals. These organizations are known for their tight adherence to rules, which benefits them.

The culture of the school has a big impact on the climate. The school atmosphere is significantly impacted by the behavior of both teachers and pupils toward one another. The school atmosphere is significantly impacted by the principal's actions and attitudes toward teachers and pupils (Thapa et al., 2013). According to Zullig et al. (2010), a variety of elements contribute significantly to the school atmosphere because it is an intangible phenomenon. The building's layout, the school's surroundings, the role of the community, the curriculum's learning-based activities, the dynamic leadership of the principal, the staff's positive outlook, the teachers' skillful methods, and other factors all have a significant impact on the school environment.

2.4. Teacher's Professional Commitment

According to Akram et al. (2015), there are three main elements that make up a professional commitment:

- A dedication and commitment to work for the profession
- Acceptance and belief in the goals of the profession.
- Able to maintain accessories for professionals

Nesje (2015) emphasized the significance of dedication to one's career. Maintaining a professional service requires a commitment to professionalism. A person cannot remain in their service or perform successfully if they are not devoted. Employee performance and efforts demonstrate their professional devotion, according to Akram et al. (2015). A person who is dedicated to his work will make an effort to do it well and will take pride in it.

Worldwide, professional devotion is valued more highly than other factors, according to Novitasari et al. (2021), because instructors play a crucial role in achieving educational goals. Students' achievement can be increased in a classroom setting if teachers are dedicated to their work. According to García-Moyano et al. (2019), there are three different types of teacher commitment:

- commitment to the institution
- commitment to students; and
- commitment to lesson plans

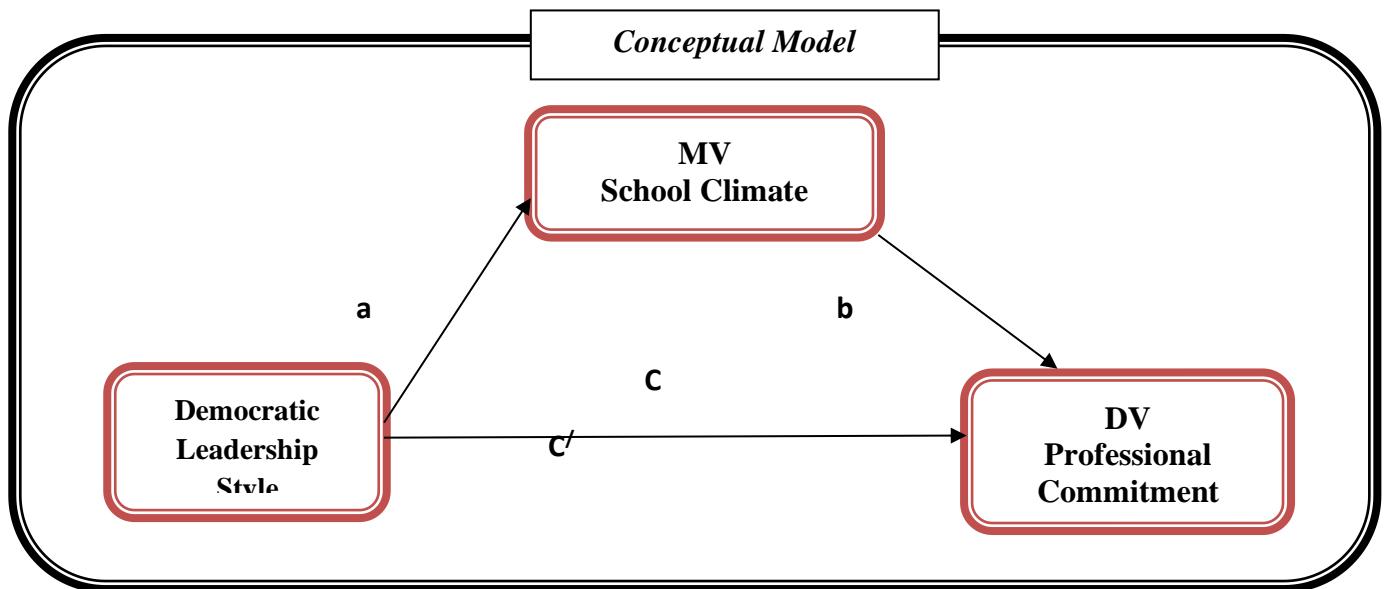
According to Cho and Haung (2012), an employee's professional dedication demonstrates their psychological attachment to their line of work and is a form of core sense. The psychological attachment of workers demonstrates their dedication to their jobs. Professional dedication also reflects workers' job satisfaction. A person will perform effectively and assume responsibility for completing the task provided with enthusiasm and zeal if they are satisfied.

Ibrahim and Iqbal (2015) assert that a person's performance can be enhanced by their professional commitment. A dedicated individual consistently delivers superior work and is content with their career. A dedicated individual is held in high regard by their coworkers and is consistently regarded by their superiors. Professional dedication shows that an employee is happy with his pay and wants to continue working hard for the same company. When staff members are dedicated, achieving organizational objectives becomes effortless. Organizational goals could not be accomplished without a commitment to professionalism and a sense of fulfillment in one's work. If workers are happy in their current surroundings and are dedicated to their work, harmony among them may be achieved. Professional dedication is closely linked to diligence, zeal, respect for oneself, and focus on the objectives of the company. varied people have given varied definitions of what "professional commitment" means. Everyone has their own opinion, thus there isn't a single definition that everyone agrees upon. However, scholars and educationists agree on one thing: "professional commitment" refers to having positive attitudes and ways of thinking about the particular profession.

(Nesje, 2015).

2.5. Conceptual Model

According to Mensah et al. (2020), the conceptual model of research examines and analyzes the relationships between concepts and variables. The conceptual model also includes fundamental theories and empirical research that are connected to the research projects. The conceptual framework outlines the research process and provides a foundation for addressing and exploring the research problem.



On the basis of literature, following hypotheses were formulated: -

H₀₁ : No relationship exist between Principals' Democratic Leadership Styles and teacher's commitment.

H₀₂ : No relationship exist between Principals' Democratic Leadership Styles and school climate.

H₀₃ : School Climate (SC) does not mediates the relationship between Democratic Leadership Style (DLS) and Professional Commitment (PC).

3. Research Methodology

Positivism research philosophy was used. The present study is descriptive in nature. In the present study, Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) working in five districts (Bannu, Lakki Marwat, D.I.Khan, Tank & Karak) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was comprised the population of the study. As per the Annual Statistical Report (ASR) 2022, 3106 Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) working in five districts in which 354 SSTs were selected by using stratified sampling method. Yamane's (1967) formula was used to calculate the sample size. A questionnaire was developed for data collection including 12 items related to democratic leadership style, 20 items related to school climate and 18 items related to professional commitment of teachers. Index of item Objective Convergence (IOC) was used in order to assess the content validity whereas reliability of the instrument was measured through Cronbach's Alpha. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and mediation analysis was used by applying Hayes (2015) Process Macro. Table 1 indicates the detail of calculation sample, validity and reliability score.

Table 1: Sampling, CVI and Cronbach's Alpha Value

Sampling	Validity	Reliability	
$N = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} = \frac{3106}{1+3106(0.5)^2} = 234$	Scale	No. of items	CVI Score
	DLSQ	12	.60-1.0
	SCQ	20	.70-.90
	TPCQ	18	.60-.90

Table 2: Showing the relationship between Principals' Democratic Leadership Styles and commitment

Variable	Leadership Styles	Professional commitment
Democratic Styles	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.739**
	N	340

P<.05

The statistical findings pertaining to the relationship between professional dedication and democratic leadership styles are presented in Table 4.15. The table shows that professional commitment and principals' leadership styles have a positive link ($r = .739^{**}$). Furthermore, the p-value is below the significance alpha threshold (.05), indicating a favorable link between the leadership styles and professional commitment of the principals. As a result, H_01 is rejected.

Table 3: Showing relationship between Principals' Democratic Leadership Styles and School Climate

Variable	Leadership Styles	Professional commitment
Leadership Styles	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.782**
	N	354

P<.05

The statistical findings pertaining to the relationship between the school climate and the democratic leadership style of the principal are presented in Table 2. The table shows that school environment and principals' democratic leadership styles have a favorable connection ($r = .782^{**}$). Furthermore, the p-value is below the significance alpha level (.05), indicating that there is a relationship between the principals' democratic leadership styles and school climate. Therefore, H_02 is hereby rejected.

Table 4: Showing School Climate (SC) significantly mediates the relationship between Democratic Leadership Style (DLS) and Professional Commitment (PC).

Steps	β	p-Value
Step1		
DV: Professional Commitment	.471	.000
IV: Democratic Leadership Style		
Step2		.000
DV: School Climate	.368	
IV: Democratic Leadership Style		
Step3 & 4		
DV: Professional Commitment	.341	.000
IV: Democratic Leadership Style	.289	.000
MV: School Climate		

Table 4 presents the relationship between DLS and PC, taking into account SC's mediating role. The four steps of the mediation four steps model developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) are described in the table. The model's first criteria was satisfied in the first stage due to a significant association between DLS and PC ($\beta = .471$, $p = .000$). In the subsequent phase, a noteworthy correlation exists between DLS and PC ($\beta = .368$, $p = .000$), satisfying the model's second condition. The third phase demonstrated that the relationship between SC and PC is significant ($\beta = .289$, $p = .000$), satisfying the model's third condition. The final step's beta value ($\beta = .341$, $p = .000$) is still significant, indicating that SC mediates the link between DLS and PC to some extent.

Table 5: Sobel test or Normal theory test

Effect	Se	Z	P
0.1910	0.0394	4.8428	0.000

The Sobel test to verify the mediating effect is displayed in table 5. The effect size (0.1910), which is statistically greater than zero, is shown in the table. Additionally, the p-value is significant at the 0.05 level, indicating the presence of a mediating influence between these factors.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate a strong and favorable correlation between teachers' professional dedication and the school climate and democratic leadership style. The study's findings concurred with those of Pinkas and Bulic (2017). The findings demonstrated a beneficial relationship between teachers' commitment to the organization and the school climate between autocratic and democratic leadership styles. Cilek (2019) found the same outcome. According to his research, it is imperative that companies adopt transformational, democratic, and supportive leadership philosophies in order to foster their growth. To foster organizational commitment, it is also advised to offer professional development programs and courses that cover a variety of abilities. The study's findings illustrate the mediating function of teachers' professional dedication and the main democratic leadership style in the school climate. The study's findings are consistent with those of Dutta and Sahney's (2016) investigation. They discovered that, in contrast to the other two leadership philosophies (autocratic and laissez-faire), a democratic approach increases professional dedication, and that the relationship between a democratic leadership style and professional commitment is strengthened by the school atmosphere. Stated differently, the relationship between leadership style and professional dedication is somewhat mediated by the school climate.

5. Conclusion And Recommendations

According to the study's findings, there is a positive association between teachers' professional dedication and their democratic leadership style, indicating that the democratic leadership style fosters greater professional commitment. The study's findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between democratic leadership style and school climate, indicating that democratic leadership style fosters a favorable learning environment. The principal values teachers' opinions, involves them in decision-making, and helps them build positive interpersonal skills, all of which improve teachers' commitment to their careers. The study came to the conclusion that professional dedication and leadership style—autocratic and democratic—are influenced by school climate to some extent. To put it another way, there is a direct association of some sort between the dependent variable (professional commitment) and the independent (leadership styles), in addition to a strong relationship between the mediator (school climate) and the dependent variable (professional commitment). The study suggested that democratic leadership techniques, which strengthen teachers' professional dedication, be implemented by the principals of particular districts. Furthermore, it is advised that democratic leadership approaches foster a supportive school environment, which in turn fosters teachers' dedication to their careers.

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