The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Students' Achievement: An Exploratory Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of transformational leadership (TL) on student achievement (SA) in secondary schools of Taluka Nawabshah, a region confronting educational challenges. The study aims to examine how four key dimensions of transformational leadership—Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration—affect student achievement. The research adopted a qualitative approach, gathering data from 10 secondary school teachers through a stratified random sampling method, employing the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to assess the principal's leadership behaviours. The findings indicate that each dimension of TL positively influences student performance. Idealized Influence fosters trust and respect, motivating students to concentrate on their academic goals. Inspirational Motivation encourages a high level of enthusiasm, resulting in increased student engagement and academic success. Intellectual Stimulation promotes innovative teaching methods that enhance critical thinking and student learning. Individualized Consideration provides personalised support to both teachers and students, leading to improved academic performance. Based on these findings, the study recommends that principals continue to model ethical leadership behaviours, enhance communication of school goals, encourage innovation in teaching, and provide personalised support for both students and staff. The study underscores the necessity for TL to create a motivating and supportive academic environment that fosters student achievement. Future research should expand the scope of the study to include a larger sample size and diverse regions to strengthen the generalisability of the findings.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership has become a core component within every organisation; therefore, the success or failure of an organisation often depends on how effective its leaders are. An organisation requires a leader to create and assemble resources to achieve its objectives. This is also true for schools; like any other organisation, they need effective management to fulfil their goals. One type of leadership that has drawn substantial scholarly attention during the last decade, particularly regarding transformational aspects, is transformational leadership. According to this educational perspective, one method by which leadership can enhance commitment to the organisational vision among followers is through transformational leadership (Li & Liu, 2022). Transformational leaders inspire followers to pursue innovation while also helping them realise the organisation's vision by acting as role models, providing their support, and fostering commitment to the organisational vision (Kwan, 2020). More importantly, education shapes the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of society. Developing personal and social competencies relevant to preventing social and labour exclusion risks is vital not only for children but also for adults (Iñiguez-Berrozpe et al., 2020). Given this relevance, it becomes essential to explore how education delivery can be optimised for parents and their children in society (Maqbool et al., 2023). Nations must indeed improve their educational curricula to adapt to the current rapid global changes (Wu & Shen, 2022).

As far as its effects on life skills pertinent to survival in today's world are concerned, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has severely disrupted almost everything. According to Imam et al. (2023), Figure 1 below provides insight into how research backs the relevance of 21st-century skills for students, contributing to critical thinking and inter- and intrapersonal development. As the market progressively dictates the need, educational institutions will have to do more than just impart knowledge; they will also have to lay the foundation for students to tackle future challenges. According to Cox et al. (2019), in real-world scenarios, 21st-century skills were, indeed, applicable, with their optimal engagement in educational settings contributing to cognitive and emotional development. ICT is almost everywhere around the globe, with increasing competition. Winning in the 21st-century workplace means being adept at problem-solving, communicating, and using technology (Chen et al., 2022). In the opinion of Naidoo (2021), technology adaptation in education is vital for fulfilling requirements arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution since traditional educational systems may not fully equip learners to meet these demands. Employers are looking for people who are equipped with digital skills, critical-thinking skills, creativity, analytical reasoning, problem-solving skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset (Gunawan & Adha, 2021). According to Heang et al. (2019), industries sought soft skills, such as communication and presentation skills, more than technical skills in various capacities: administration, human resources, and sales/marketing. Therefore, the education system itself must respond to these core competencies. One of the most significant challenges facing the 21st century is quality education. Organisations place a high premium on individuals who possess the skills and vision to innovate within the educational system; these individuals contribute not only to the advancement of education but also to economic growth and development (Yadete, 2023).

Figure 1. *21st Century Skills (Imam et al., 2023)*

According to its introduction, which increasingly focuses on the national demand for 21st-century schooling skills and the rapid growth of global educational institutions, Pakistan introduced a Single National Curriculum in 2019. Additionally, the 2023 report outlines the challenges and opportunities presented to Pakistan in skill development. Despite being the fourth country contributing to STEM skills on the popular e-learning platform Coursera, Pakistan surprisingly ranked 92 out of 100 countries for overall skill proficiency. The country has significant gaps concerning skills in business, technology, and data science and scores well below regional averages. Internet access is limited, which poses a serious issue for achieving educational opportunities and economic growth, frequently disrupted by shutdowns that interrupt businesses. Wealthier countries invest more in human skills and AI-related studies; however, in Pakistan, there remains a gender gap in online learning. Nevertheless, the second-highest global growth rate for professional certificate enrolment demonstrates that Pakistan has promising prospects. All these findings indicate a need for increased investment in digital infrastructure, educational reforms, and skill development measures to bridge the skills gap worldwide and maximise economic opportunities (Razzaque, 2023).

Therefore, the aim is to study the influence of transformational leadership performance on students' achievement, as the study is intended to be conducted in the secondary schools of Taluka Nawabshah, which are significantly educationally deprived. It remains largely unexplored, despite calls for educational reforms through the Single National Curriculum aimed at transforming leadership for academic excellence. Most schools in Taluka Nawabshah face challenges related to resources, socioeconomic inequalities, and access to quality teaching. While transformational leadership is globally recognised as a catalyst for organisational performance, the extent of its influence on student performance in this region is still unknown. This study seeks to close this gap by examining the effects of transformational leadership behaviours, such as role modelling, motivation, and fostering innovation, on student achievement (SA) and the overall performance of schools in Taluka Nawabshah. Enhancing the quality of education provided and, ultimately, improving student learning in the region's secondary schools will necessitate an understanding of these dynamics.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the study, as illustrated in Figure 2 below, examines the relationship between transformational leadership (TL) and students' achievement (SA). It identifies four key dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. These components work together to foster an environment conducive to SA, creating a supportive, motivating, and innovative atmosphere from the school leader. Idealized influence refers to the leader being a role model in the eyes of their followers and is thus worthy of respect and admiration. Inspirational motivation concerns the leader's ability to rally and inspire people by articulating a visibly appealing future. Intellectual stimulation nurtures an environment where creativity and critical thinking are encouraged, while individualized consideration pertains to the leader's attention to enhancing their followers' individual development. The framework examines how these aspects of transformational leadership contribute to student academic achievement, while emphasising school leaders' potential to cultivate a positive learning environment and improve student outcomes. It aligns with the perspective that transformational leadership is a fundamental pillar in motivating students, enhancing their academic performance, and fostering their overall growth.
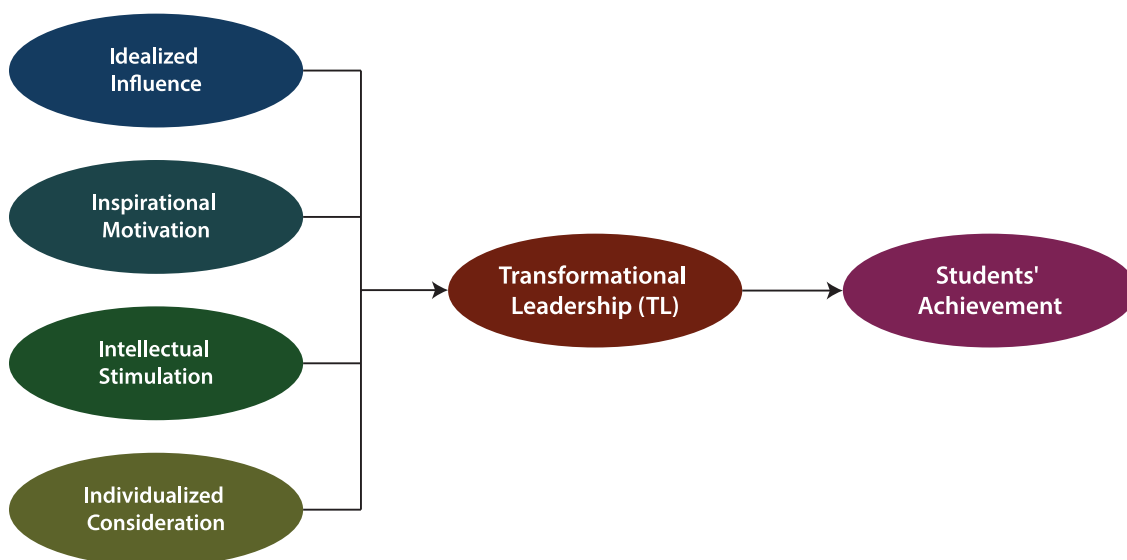

Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Research Objectives

1 To find out the effect of idealized influence of TL on SA.
2 To investigate the effect of inspirational motivation of TL on SA.
3 To evaluate the effect of intellectual stimulation of TL on SA.
4 To examine the effect of individualized consideration of TL on SA.
5 To explore the overall effect of TL on SA.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study primarily focuses on the role of TL in SA within the secondary schools of Taluka Nawabshah. In addition, it will examine the four dimensions of TL: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, and their direct or indirect impact on student outcomes. This research adopts a qualitative approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of various stakeholders, including school leadership, teachers, and students. The Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was employed to collect data, providing a structured method for assessing TL behaviours. Data regarding students' academic performance can serve as a foundation for legitimising and measuring their achievements. Interviews and observations will capture the experiential and subjective nature of TL, offering insights into how it is operationalised in the classroom and its effects on student motivation and engagement. The scope of the study also includes various control variables, such as socioeconomic status, prior academic achievement, teacher experience, and school resources, which ensure that the results are not obscured by extraneous factors. Ultimately, the scope aims to thoroughly address the gap in literature linking TL with SA within rural and semi-urban educational settings, making a significant contribution to the discourse on educational leadership in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In educational management, setting organisational aims is often challenged by external bodies such as national curricula, policy institutions, and stakeholder expectations, all of which impose limitations on school autonomy in establishing those goals based on student needs. Hence, we recognise that effective school leadership is vital. Strong leaders balance national mandates with student-centred goals and facilitate collaboration to establish a common vision. Educational leadership, therefore, is the form of leadership that inspires teachers and students towards the institutional objectives. It fosters innovation and is responsive to emerging trends such as digital, technological, and human literacy. In addition to the aforementioned, leaders must also demonstrate competence in management functions, considering the 21st-century skills essential for institutional success in the era of 4.0. In response to such challenges, transformational leadership (TL) serves as a robust support for guiding schools through the complexities of the 4.0 era. TL is defined by Burns (1978) as inspiring and motivating followers so that they rise above their own self-interest for the benefit of the organisation. TL focuses on key issues through aligning organisational goals, leading to enhanced engagement and improved performance that directly contribute to overall success. Wilson Heenan et al. (2023) synthesised 15 studies spanning 2012 to 2022, indicating that transformational school leadership positively influences staff motivation, thus fostering a more positive school culture. This highlights the close relationship between leadership and outcomes, further underscoring the importance of TL in education.

Most importantly, this scenario of TL is beneficial in addressing the ever-changing needs of students amid the 4.0 era-the era of technological advancement characterised by extensive penetration of information and communication technology. Kwan (2020) confirmed transformational leadership as a moderator of the effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes, with varying effects depending on the level of TL practised in the schools.

Eliophotou Menon and Lefteri (2021) discussed the relationship between TL and teacher self-efficacy in their literature review, stressing the impact on workplace satisfaction, stress, student performance, and organisational transformation. All of this emphasises how transformational leadership energises the staff and helps create a better learning environment aimed towards SA. Furthermore, TL drives teacher leadership, which directly affects student outcomes. Li & Liu (2022) established that principal TL enhances teacher leadership and influences teacher self-efficacy. Nonetheless, while both leadership styles are associated with teacher self-efficacy, teacher leadership alone has a positive correlation with student learning outcomes. Additionally, Kareem et al. (2023) assert that TL plays a significant role in three domains of teacher commitment: commitment to the institution, student development, and self-development. TL positively influences all spheres, demonstrating again how leadership aligns with the institutional vision and mission.

On the contrary, when teacher competency and self-efficacy are combined with transformational leadership, a significant positive impact emerges on teacher performance. According to Muliati et al. (2022), these factors work together to enhance teacher performance, thereby influencing student outcomes. Thus, Rachmad et al. (2023) reaffirmed their assertion that TL by principals is observed to have a positive measure of influence on teacher performance (31.5%) and teacher motivation (62.5%), with the total estimated at 77.6%. Concerning student performance, the influence of TL on academic achievement becomes clearer. The relationship between principals' idealised influence and students' academic performance in the Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) was found to be very strong and statistically significant, as established by Kitur et al. (2020), recommending that principals adopt and demonstrate idealised influence to enhance academic achievement. Gunawan and Adha (2021) also highlighted how instructional, transformational, and spiritual leadership directly impact teachers' performance and students' achievements, thus demonstrating that TL contributes to better outcomes through improved teacher performance.

Transformational teacher behaviour, such as modelling, creativity, personal communication, and affirmation, has been shown to positively influence students' performance, according to Muriuki et al. (2022). The teacher leader is thus regarded as essential to academic performance and must be supported by a competency training programme designed to enhance these practices. Furthermore, Trigueros et al. (2020) demonstrated that leadership positively predicted academic resilience and motivation, which in turn mitigated burnout and improved performance, further emphasising the important role that leadership plays in enhancing student outcomes. The capacity of TL to improve various aspects of academic achievement has made it a powerful and beneficial style of leadership. TL is an influential leader in secondary education who encourages, inspires, and intellectually stimulates both teachers and students, who work collaboratively to achieve improved learning outcomes. A shared vision is cultivated, creativity is promoted, and individuals are supported in prioritising the needs of the school community above their own self-interests. In both direct and indirect ways, TL has been found to impact student performance.

Many studies have suggested that transformational leadership (TL) raises student performance in diverse settings, enhances teachers' cooperation, and improves the school environment (Day et al., 2016). Supriyanto et al. (2020) demonstrated that TL, creativity, and IT have a direct relationship with and a significant impact on SA; therefore, these factors are crucial

for enhancing academic performance in educational institutions. Mirsultan and Marimuthu (2021) also stated that principal leadership styles are among the factors that create a conducive atmosphere for work and increase job satisfaction for teachers. Specifically, transformational leadership provided environmental conditions that boosted teacher satisfaction, which subsequently influenced student performance. In turn, Ogbonnaya et al. (2020) reported a positive correlation between TL styles and English language students' academic achievement. Thus, TL was positively associated with students' performance, highlighting its significance in improving educational outcomes in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. Sun and Leithwood (2015) conducted a related study on TL which, by enhancing student motivation levels, influenced their academic achievement. The study suggested that TL continuously fosters students in pleasant experiential contexts that are closely aligned with intrinsic motivation, which in turn correlates with much higher levels of engagement in learning and consequently better academic outcomes.

A positive learning environment in schools is created by TL, which, according to Day et al. (2016), is defined. Mutual respect, trust and strong emphasis on academic success characterize the culture in the schools TL describes as more adaptive. The students are more likely to achieve effectively in an atmosphere formed by these essentials. While there have been several studies on the effects of TL on student outcomes, most existing literature focuses on quantitative studies conducted in broader or international contexts than the one under consideration (Kwan, 2020; Li & Liu, 2022). These studies largely focus on macro-level impacts of TL, often overlooking the regional and contextual differences. Some salient studies in this area include those by Wilson Heenan et al. (2023) and Eliophotou Menon & Lefteri (2021), which place much stress on positive relationships between TL and teacher motivation, as well as their effects on student outcomes. However, there has yet to be some qualitative research on the subjective experiences and perceptions of school heads, teachers, and students in a given educational context, such as secondary schools in Taluka Nawabshah. The originality of this research is represented in its qualitative character, which grants a rich, nuanced understanding of how TL is manifested in this particular region. The study also aims to understand the local dynamics of TL and its role in SA. Further, the research adds to the literature by filling in the context gap in TL studies, revealing the practice in rural or semi-urban education contexts, which is still a less explored area in the current body of work.

METHODOLOGY

The current study was based on a qualitative research design to investigate the effects of transformational leadership on SA in secondary schools in Nawabshah Taluka. In this study, a total of 10 secondary schools in Nawabshah Taluka were selected through stratified random sampling as representatives of both urban and rural schools. Data were collected using the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), designed by Bass and Avolio, which operates on four dimensions of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. In addition to being complimented by MLQ data, academic data such as grades and test scores were evaluated to understand the correlation between leadership styles and SA. Further qualitative data were collected through interviews with teachers, administrators, and students regarding their experiences with leadership behaviours in the classroom and their effects on student participation. Observational data

were collected on routine school visits to allow the researchers to observe transformational leadership practices in real time. The study controlled for socioeconomic status, prior academic achievement, teacher experience, and school resources. Thematic analysis, identifying trends and relationships for a comprehensive understanding of transformational leadership and its influence on student outcomes in secondary education, was done with the help of NVivo 15.

Data Analysis and Research Findings

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents who consist of both male (5) and female (5) teachers with ages ranging from 29 to 50 years. They differ in terms of their teaching experience from 7 to 20 years, suggesting a diversity in terms of expertise as well. School types comprise public (6) and private (4) located in urban (5) and rural (5) areas. The diversified subjects are science, English, mathematics, social studies, Urdu, physics, biology, chemistry, and computer science. Teachers spend about 3 - 9 years with the current principal, gaining exposure to varied experiences concerning the impact of leadership. As far as demographic factors are concerned, this sample is strong in age experience (50% of its respondents having over 10 years of teaching experience).

Table 1. *Demographics of Respondents*

Respon- dent #	Gender	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	School Type	School Location	Subject Area	Experience with Principal
1	Female	34	10	Public	Urban	Science	5 years
2	Male	42	16	Private	Urban	English	7 years
3	Female	29	7	Public	Rural	Mathematics	9 years
4	Male	50	20	Private	Urban	Social Studies	4 years
5	Female	38	12	Public	Rural	Urdu	6 years
6	Male	41	15	Private	Rural	Physics	7 years
7	Female	33	8	Public	Urban	Biology	3 years
8	Male	45	18	Public	Rural	Chemistry	5 years
9	Female	36	11	Private	Urban	Computer Science	7 years
10	Male	40	14	Public	Rural	English	8 years

The NVivo 15 software was used to analyze using a mind map. The mind map in Figure 1 establishes a structured framework for analyzing the effects of transformational leadership (TL) on student achievement (SA). The traits of the principal's leadership have been organized into four major themes: Idealized Consideration, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration, all of which have an overall influence on student achievement. Each of these four themes was linked to a series of questions addressing the principal's leadership style. Idealized Consideration focuses on the professor as a role model and one who instils trust; Inspirational Motivation focuses on how the message and energy of the principal communicates to inspire both teachers and students. Intellectual Stimulation deals with provoking new ideas in pedagogy and professional development, whereas Individualized Consideration deals with providing individual support to teachers and empathy for student needs. It was a mind map that made the NVivo analysis easier by categorizing the qualitative data (such as interview responses) according to those themes, allowing for a systematized approach toward analyzing how the qualities of leadership affect student success.
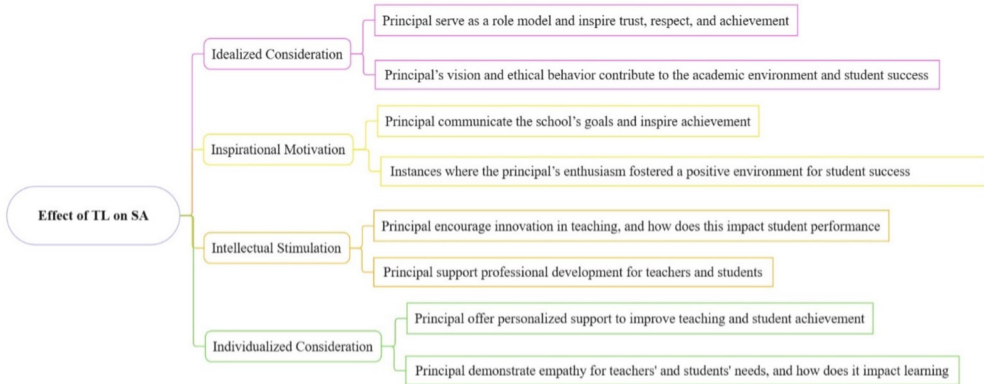
Figure 1. *Mind Map for TL and SA*

Research Objective 1: Effect of Idealized Influence of Transformational Leadership on Student Achievement (SA)

The idealized influence of the principal will perpetually remain a significant contributor toward building trust and respect for teachers and ensuring academic success for students. The respondents frequently mentioned ethical leadership and role model characteristics of the principal as important sources of inspiration for the teachers and the students alike. Respondent 1 said, "She maintains a high level of professionalism, always treating both staff and students with respect," who further exemplified the ethical standards set by the principal as a cultural form of their school. Respondent 4 commented, "His transparency in decision-making builds a lot of trust among us," stressing that honest and straightforward leadership is significant in establishing the baseline toward trust creation. Such ethical leadership establishes an environment in which students feel appreciated, something which contributes directly to their academic engagement and performance.

Student achievement is thus the central focus of the study as expressed by the prominent size of the word "students." Other impactful words are "principal" and "trust," "respect," "environment," "academic," and "model," which were seen as the principal creating trust and respect within the academic environment. The word "ethical" suggests moral leadership. Words such as "motivates," "teachers," "vision," and "encourages" serve to highlight the principal's role in inspiring and providing direction to teachers and students, promoting the ideas of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Other words, like "culture," "everyone," and "success," suggest a positive school culture where the principal's leadership inspires all stakeholders toward collective success.

Figure 2. *Word Cloud for RQ-1*

Research Objective 2: Effect of Inspirational Motivation of Transformational Leadership on Student Achievement (SA)

The principal's inspiration and motivation of teachers and students direct these groups to embrace the vision of the school for high-level academic performance. Communication of the objectives of the school and the ensuing enthusiasm from the principal are vital in stimulating most stakeholders. Respondent 2 observed, "The principal's passion for achieving these goals was contagious," highlighting the principal's enthusiasm in creating a ripple effect for all teachers and students to rally towards excellence. Respondent 5 noted, "Her enthusiasm about the importance of each student's potential was very motivating," implying that the principal encourages students to strive hard for her expectations. This communication and enthusiasm have increased the level of ambience for students to perform better. Examples of motivational sessions prior to the exams, mentioned by various respondents, attest to contributing a greater sense of commitment among students and good performance in the end.

Secondly, it is observable in Figure 3 that while words like "students" surface, demonstrating that academic outcomes remain the focus. The words "school," "enthusiasm," "motivation," "success," and "principal" populate these images, expressing the principal's centrality in nurturing a motivated, enthusiastic learning environment. The word "enthusiasm" holds special weight because it illustrates how the principal's leadership inspires students and staff alike. Also, the presence of the terms "results" and "performance" indicates equally the attempts to motivate the students and staff directly tied to the improvement of academic performance. The presence of the words "communicates," "explains," and "achieves" further points to how the principal encourages teachers and students to remain focused on the achievement of the objectives of the school. The presence of terms like "challenges," "success," and "performances" suggests that in the principal leadership, there is a management of obstacles and celebration of achievements, thus contributing to a positive and active school culture.

Figure 3. *Word Cloud for RQ-2*

Research Objective 3: Effect of Intellectual Stimulation of Transformational Leadership on Student Achievement (SA)

In these ways, the interaction between the principal and teachers generates a culture of intellectual growth directly linked with higher academic performance. Teacher 7 said, "She encourages us to think critically about our teaching methods," confirming the principal's

focus on developing a reflective and innovative teaching culture. Besides, Teacher 9 stated, "She suggested incorporating real-world problems in my Computer Science class, which has really helped students understand the material better," which indicates that the principal not only supports but challenges teachers to innovate. This support leads to those more fun and interactive methods of teaching that, according to the interviewees, promote better understanding among students and, hence, better academic results.

Secondly, teaching shines out among the words emphasized in figure 4, highlighting the study's focus on teaching practices, while students remain the core subject linking leadership with student achievement. Very strong links are drawn on the effectiveness of principals on professional development with the keywords training, methods, new, encourages, and development. These terms show how the principal supported the teachers in adopting new teaching strategies through workshops and in improving their effectiveness. For instance, the word workshops emerged often, confirming the trend that professional development of training was a major thrust initiated by the principal. The presence of words interactive, methods, and classroom portrays the encouragement of innovative and active teaching strategies by the principal. In addition, the words support and encouragement portray the principal providing necessary resources and guidance for the success of teachers.

Figure 4. *Word Cloud for RQ-3*

Research Objective 4: Effect of Individualized Consideration of Transformational Leadership on Student Achievement (SA)

The individualized consideration shown by the principal is vital in addressing the discrete needs of the teachers and the students, thereby enhancing the learning environment and academic outcomes. The principal's capacity to provide personal mentorship for teachers in specific challenges contributes to their professional growth and ultimately student achievement. Respondent 1 highlighted, "The principal's support has helped me become more confident and the students become more attentive and perform better academically", corroborating the direct link between teacher support and student performance. Respondent 6 elaborated, "The principal arranged for additional tutoring and counseling for the student, which made a huge

difference in their academic performance," meaning that a more individualized type of support for students can greatly influence their academic development.

Secondly, figure 5 presents words such as "students," again carrying the focal point of this study. The words "teachers," "personalized," "support," "principle," and "environment" appear quite a great deal, emphasizing the principal's focus on establishing a learning environment that is supportive through individualized attention given to both students and teachers. The prominent words "personalized," "needs," and "challenging" reflect the individualized consideration of the principal and his ability to adjust for the unique difficulties faced by students. The word "personal" provides an indication for a specifically tailored way of teaching and leading, thus reinforcing that the principal actively engages in understanding and meeting the needs of both teachers and students. Furthermore, the word "strategies" suggests that the principal encourages creativity in instruction and student engagement, particularly as it pertains to overcoming challenges. Also, words such as "engaging," "supportive," and "empathetic" refer to the principal's emphasis on a welcoming and motivating atmosphere regarding growth. The interplay of these traits reaffirms that the principal's approach to leadership is significant, as it melds the need for personal attention, wisdom through empathy, and creativity in strategies to reach the goal of student success.
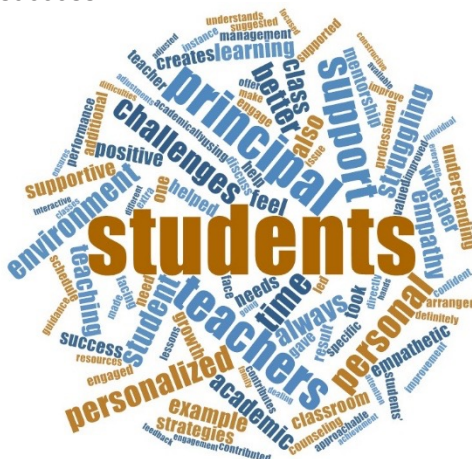

Figure 5. *Word Cloud for RQ-4*

Research Objective 5: Overall Effect of Transformational Leadership on Student Achievement (SA)

The overall effect of transformational leadership on student achievement is positively correlated, with all respondents acknowledging significant improvement in students' performance. It is this very skill of the principal where he allows the various components of optimal leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—to address fully those aspects that bolster the environment for learning. Respondent 10 stated, "Since he became principal, I've seen a significant improvement in student performance," while Respondent 8 echoed, "The principal's leadership has had a very positive impact on student achievement." Such insight speaks to the leadership of the principal with respect to enhancing the academic fortune of the students. Effectively engaging school staff and students, creating a shared vision grounded in clear goals, supporting risk-

taking with regard to new ideas and approaches to teaching, and caring for individual students contribute to a measurable enhancement in student performance in an assortment of content areas.

Figure 6 goes on to detail some of the vital themes surrounding the principal's leadership philosophy and its relationship to student achievement. Once again, "students" and "teachers" are in enormous lettering, emphasizing the dual focus on helping teachers and achieving success for students in the academic setting. Perhaps more disconcertingly, words like "academic," "success," and "performance" have been blown up in size to accentuate the principal's responsibility in setting lofty expectations for student learning outcomes and overall improvement in academics. The words "teaching" and "methods" reinforce the extent to which the principal shaped the instructional environment, encouraging innovative and creative approaches to help further student learning. Support, encourages, and professional all point to the ways the principal has helped teachers in guidance and professional development. The response of several interviewees pointed toward these two things: the principal provides a personal and positive atmosphere for the classroom. The principle leads through collaboration and by example, keeping strengthening the principal's supportive role for high results culture, reflected in the terms of "collaboration" and "leadership."

Figure 6. *Word Cloud for RQ-5*

The analysis indicates that the transformational leadership of the principal, characterized by ethical behavior, clear communication, encouragement of innovation, and personalized support, greatly influences student achievement. The unvarying positive responses across all five research objectives signify the success of this leadership style in fostering a productive and supportive environment for learning; therefore, independent of other factors, it contributes to the enhancement of students' academic outcomes in Taluka Nawabshah. On the other hand, the hierarchical chart presented in Figure 7 highlights too the structured interrelationship among various dimensions of transformational leadership and their collective influence on student achievement (SA). The chart is divided into five segments, emphasizing how each leadership trait-Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration, and Overall Effect of Transformational Leadership-works to create a favorable

atmosphere in which academic work would proceed. The hierarchical arrangement of the chart suggests that each of these leadership qualities effectively works on its own; however, their collective contribution is critical for improving student success. By segmenting the chart, we can also clearly see how much weight each dimension carries in affecting the outcomes of student learning, thus reinforcing the idea that transformational leadership is actually a multidimensional and integrated approach. As such, the overall structure depicts a holistic approach to leadership, where each segment strengthens the other in highlighting the all-

encompassing role played by leadership in academic performance.

Figure 7. *Hierarchical Chart for RQ-5*

DISCUSSION

The present study concurs with and progresses further from the literature pertaining to transformational leadership (TL) in relation to student achievement (SA). Like Wilson Heenan et al. (2023), who highlighted a substantial link between TL and school staff motivation, the current research discovered that the principal's Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation Interaction fosters trust and zeal in the school toward creating a positive atmosphere affecting the students' academic performance. Participants noted that the principal's engagement in ethical behavior and role modeling engendered respect and trust, consistent with Kitur et al. (2020), who argued that an idealized influence fosters academic achievement. The current research is extending from findings in a setting like Taluka Nawabshah, which is not enriched with educational opportunities, declaring that TL can serve as a compensating mechanism to turn such odds. In terms of Inspirational Motivation, the findings are consistent

with the conclusion of Sun and Leithwood (2015), that TL in itself improved motivation and engagement among students, thus fostering better academic outcomes. In the current study, inspirational expressions of the principal frequently maintained traction with and motivated both teachers and students in relation to academic performance, lending credence to the motivational leadership-student achievement link described by Kwan (2020) and Gunawan & Adha (2021). Relating to Intellectual Stimulation, the present work rebuts Li & Liu (2022), showing that TL depends on leadership by teachers and self-efficacy of teachers to promote student attainments. Respondents described how the principal encouraged innovative teaching methods and professional development, which improved teaching quality and student performance, reinforcing the idea that TL cultivates a creative and intellectually stimulating environment. The findings of the current study corroborate those of Muliati et al. (2022) and Rachmad et al. (2023), demonstrating that Individualized Consideration has a positive effect on the performance of both teachers and students. In Taluka Nawabshah, the principal's customized support and understanding for students' needs enhanced student achievement, again backed up by literature emphasizing the significance of individual attention in promoting academic performance.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Conclusion

The study attempts to examine the effect transformational leadership (TL) has on student achievement (SA) among secondary schools of Taluka Nawabshah, which is an under-educational region. It aims to understand how these four basic dimensions of TL -- idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration – affect students' academic performance in the region. This research emerged from the critical need to understand how TL behaviors like role modeling, motivating others, encouraging innovation, and personalized support influence the teacher's performance and learning. On this basis, a qualitative research design was adopted in which the stratified random sampling method selected ten secondary schools of Taluka Nawabshah in both urban and rural areas. Primary data are collected on the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) administered to assess principal transformational leadership behaviors, as well as academic record information such as grades and test scores. Further qualitative data were collected via interviews with the school's teachers, administrators, and students according to observations made during school visits. Such a methodological approach allows for capturing from all sides the subjective experiences and perceptions of the studied context. The findings of the study indicate a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and student achievement. Idealized Influence creates a trusting and respectful environment where students are motivated and focused; Inspirational Motivation develops a culture of high academic expectation so that the enthusiasm of the principal inspires teachers and students to achieve more; Intellectual Stimulation leads to the use of innovative methods of teaching by teachers, which in turn engage students and improve their academic outcomes; and Individualized Consideration addresses the uniqueness of needs presented by both teachers and students in terms of individualized support and, therefore, improved academic performance.

Recommendations

1 Based on the findings that Idealized Influence plays a significant role in fostering trust, respect, and academic success. Therefore, it is recommended that principals continue to model ethical behavior and professionalism in their interactions with teachers and students.

2 The findings show that Inspirational Motivation positively impacts both teacher and student performance. Therefore, it is recommended that principals adopt more frequent motivational strategies, including regular goal-setting sessions and school-wide events that align with the school's vision. In addition to verbal encouragement, it would be beneficial for the principal to publicly recognize student and teacher achievements, fostering a culture of success. Enhanced communication about the school's goals through newsletters, assemblies, and one-on-one meetings will help keep the school community aligned and motivated.

3 Given that Intellectual Stimulation encourages critical thinking and innovation in teaching, it is recommended that principals create structured opportunities for professional development that challenge teachers to explore new pedagogical methods and integrate technology into the classroom. Organizing workshops, peer observation sessions, and subject-specific teaching seminars can provide teachers with the tools they need to engage students in innovative ways.

4 The findings highlight the importance of Individualized Consideration in supporting both teachers and students. Based on this, it is recommended that principals implement personalized mentoring programs for teachers, offering tailored support based on individual professional development needs. Additionally, creating systems for identifying and addressing students' academic or emotional struggles early on will ensure that personalized support is provided in a timely manner.

5 The overall findings indicate that transformational leadership contributes significantly to student achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that the school leadership team invest in leadership training programs for principals that focus on the development of all four transformational leadership dimensions. Furthermore, schools should foster a culture of collaboration among teachers, students, and administrators, where transformational leadership practices are regularly discussed, refined, and shared. This holistic approach will help ensure that the leadership practices positively influence both teacher motivation and student success, leading to continuous improvement in academic outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study provides valuable insights into the impact of transformational leadership (TL) on student achievement (SA) in secondary schools of Taluka Nawabshah. One significant limitation is the geographical focus. The study was confined to a specific region—Taluka Nawabshah—which may not fully represent the broader educational landscape of Pakistan. Given the educational disparities between urban and rural regions, the findings may not be generalizable to other areas with different socioeconomic conditions or educational resources. Future research could expand the scope by including schools from various regions of Pakistan, or even across countries, to better compare how TL influences student achievement in diverse educational contexts. Another limitation is the sample size. The study involved 10 schools, with qualitative data collected from 10 teachers. While this provides rich insights into the experiences and perceptions of teachers, administrators, and students, a larger sample size would

strengthen the robustness and generalizability of the findings. Future studies could incorporate a more comprehensive sample, including a larger number of schools and participants, to better capture the diversity of experiences across different educational environments. Additionally, the study relied heavily on self-reported data through interviews, which may introduce biases, such as social desirability or recall bias. To mitigate this, future research could incorporate a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data with quantitative measures of student achievement and leadership behaviors, such as standardized test scores and performance evaluations. This would provide a more holistic view of how transformational leadership affects academic outcomes. Finally, the study explored four dimensions of transformational leadership, but it did not examine how these leadership qualities interact with other contextual factors, such as cultural or community influences. Future research could explore how TL practices intersect with these external factors and influence educational outcomes, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities at play.

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