



Integrating Distributed and Instructional Leadership: A Combined-Model
Analysis of Teachers’ Organizational Commitment in Karachi Secondary
Schools

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Abstract

With regards to Social Exchange Theory, this study focused on the individual and joint implications of distributed and instructional leadership on the commitment of organizational teachers within the secondary schools of Karachi, Pakistan. In this study, quantitative cross-sectional design was used to select a sample of 499 secondary school teachers from public and private secondary schools, and secondary data was used. Instruments measuring distributed leadership, instructional leadership, and organizational commitment were used. The data were analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equations Modeling. The study showed that teachers’ organizational commitment was positively influenced by both distributed leadership and instructional leadership. Most importantly, the integrated distributed instructional leadership model was showed to have a greater effect on organizational commitment that was greater than the effect of either of the leadership approaches on their own. The results showed that leadership that embraces relational involvement, joint distributed leadership, and instructional leadership integrates of balanced exchange that nurtures an environment of trust and professional commitment of teachers. The study strengthens The Social Exchange Theory within the context of Educational leadership and contributes to a practically relevant empirical study from a context that has not been studied widely. The results also have consequential importance for the development of school leadership and educational policies with the aim of boosting the commitment and organizational stability of teachers in secondary schools that have limited educational resources.

Keywords: Distributed leadership; Instructional leadership; Organizational commitment; Social Exchange Theory; Secondary schools; Pakistan.

Article Details:

Received on 30 Dec, 2025
Accepted on 29 Jan, 2026
Published on 30 Jan, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The commitment of teachers to their organizations has become an important issue for education systems around the globe, especially for systems that face challenges related to institutional instability, insufficient resources, and escalating professional requirements. Organizational commitment, or the emotional attachment teachers demonstrate toward their place of work and their loyalty to stay within the organization, has been illustrated by Meyer and Allen (1997) as a sense of professional commitment. Teachers who demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment are more effective, are more resilient, and are more likely to engage in activities that foster improvement in the organization. All of these elements are necessary to facilitate the improvement and sustainability of the education system and the quality of education received by students (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). However, in many of the developing countries, such as Pakistan, educational system commitment by teachers is weak and is a result of dysfunctional systems, lack of educational leadership, and a non-supportive organizational climate (Akhtar, 2024).

There are certain difficulties that are made even worse at large metropolitan locations like Karachi, where schools are affected by a large variety of social, political and economic issues. The socio-economic divide, political fragmentation, and rapid city growth, Urban are also socio economic inequalities, and administrative fragmentation that further complicate the interplay of school systems and educators (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). Teachers working within these contexts tend to endure immense workloads, insufficient professional exposure, and a relative lack of pedagogical guidance, all of which contribute to the weakening (OECD, 2019) of motivational desire and a subsequent even low organizational attachment. Therefore, in the case of urban secondary education, addressing organizational commitment to the teacher became a key factor within the school effectiveness investments.

Educational leadership is the main attempted instrument to influence the professional career of the teachers and therefore the organizational commitment. The leadership influence, after the classroom instruction, is, within the educational settings, largely sole and overwhelmingly accepted, the most important factor (Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2020). Effective school leadership thoroughly restructures concepts, and even the entire scope of support, equity, professional worth, and growth responsiveness within the organizational context, and even extends on the individual motivation, commitment, and related to the organization (Day & Sammons, 2016). School principals are expected in the contemporary education systems to transition, no more administratively, as managerial, to become instructional leaders and as collaborators of sustained professional policy that is responsive to the organization's educational demands (Hallinger, 2020).

Though valuable, leadership practices in most Pakistani secondary schools remain bureaucratic, hierarchical, and compliance-oriented. Principals are often appointed based on administrative seniority, without consideration of leadership and instructional expertise. Consequently, school leaders often lack the ability to assist teachers in professional development, support teachers in transformative democratic decision-making, or build trust. Research from Pakistan indicates that leadership in public and low-fee private schools in cities like Karachi suffers from the leadership deficits which result in low teacher morale and weak professional and organizational commitments (Akhtar, 2024; Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017). In leadership studies, instructional and distributed leadership are two paradigms that potential to address the problem.

According to Spillane, distributed leadership involves a form of shared accountability, engagement, and distribution of leadership activities to all members of the organization,

including teachers as full leaders (Spillane et al, 2021). Instructive leadership, on the other hand, focuses on the alignment and supervision of the curriculum, the integration of professional training, and the establishment of a consistent educational environment in which the head teacher is a dominant figure in steering teaching and learning, (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2011). Both of these frameworks of leadership, if practiced independently, have been shown to positively influence teachers' motivation, teaching effectiveness, and organizational commitment (Bush, 2013; Robinson et al, 2008).

However, recent theories have suggested that looking at leadership frameworks in silos will lead to incomplete views of the overall effectiveness of leadership in complex school settings. The view that distributed leadership and instructional leadership are explained by Harris (2010), not competing approaches, but rather, are, complementary; is gaining traction. While distributed leadership creates the relational conditions of trust, empowerment and shared ownership, instructional leadership acts as the guiding alignment and coherence for sustained pedagogical improvement. In synthesized form, these frameworks of leadership could provide a more rounded and context-sensitive model for enhancing teacher commitment than the singular model frameworks.

Although the theoretical support for the integration of the leadership is growing, there is still very little empirical evidence addressing the combination of the two leadership types, distributed leadership and instructional leadership, and their effects on organizational commitment of teachers, most of all in developing countries and their urban areas. Much of the current scholarship has focused on the various models of leadership singly, resulting in a lack of understanding of how leadership integration works in demanding contexts like Pakistani secondary schools (Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al. 2020).

The current study is aimed at filling this particular gap by exploring how the combination of distributed and instructional leadership affects organizational commitment of teachers in the secondary schools of Karachi. Guided by the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), this study will treat leadership as a process occurring in a social context in which there are supportive, empowering, and instructional leadership behaviors that generate positive exchanges that lead teachers to respond with loyalty and engagement and heightened commitment. This study will contribute to integrating leadership theory by conducting empirical research in a context that is both an urban center and an area that has received very little scholarly attention. It will also inform policy makers and school leaders on how to improve teacher commitment and stabilize organizations in schools with difficult educational environments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

This study centers on Social Exchange Theory (SET), which is a profound theory explaining how leadership practices motivate teachers' organizational commitment through social relationships of reciprocity. As described by Blau (1964) and developed by Homans (1958), social behavior hinges on the exchanges of a relationship. Relationship exchanges are assessed on the basis of benefits, costs, trust, and obligations. Within organizations, employees develop a positive attitude and reciprocate a commitment to the organization through loyalty and other engagement behaviors when leaders demonstrate positive behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Cook, & Emerson, 1978).

In educational settings, leadership styles represent a central formative mechanism for establishing, preserving, and strengthening social exchange relationships. Teachers perceive relationships to the organization as equitable and beneficial when principals exhibit support, fairness, professional respect, and concern for the teachers' well-being. These perceptions, as

posited by SET, nurture emotional affiliation and a sense of indebtedness, which propel teachers to reciprocate with advanced devotion to the organization and added voluntary effort (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Wayne et al., 2009). On the contrary, leadership that demonstrates control, absence from the decision-making process, and no instructional support dilutes exchange relationships, leading to a reluctance from the teachers to expend any effort beyond what their contracts stipulate (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

In this research, distributed leadership and instructional leadership give rise to different but related organizational social exchange processes and will be treated as different but complementary forms of leadership. The social exchange processes of distributed leadership are described as reciprocal, streaming from collaboration and trust, while the processes are perceived as professional recognition of leadership tasks from the staff (Spillane, 2006; Spillane et al., 2021). When teachers are included in the leadership processes, they are likely to see themselves as more than passive recipients of top-down directives. Rather, it is likely that they will feel more engaged and committed to the leadership processes (Harris, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Conversely, instructional leadership is more concerned with managerial and task-based social exchange (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2011). Instructional leadership deals with a range of educational topics including designing coherent curricula, monitoring teaching practices, providing professional development, and maintaining high standards for teaching and learning. Instructional leaders enhance teachers' perceived professional role and efficacy by offering support in the form of instructional leadership practices. According to SET, as the teachers perceive more instructional engagement from the leaders, their engagement to improve their practices and school statutory aims will be more (Robinson et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2020).

Integrated Distributed-Instructional Leadership Model

Recent trends in educational leadership research highlight the futility of studying different leadership models in parallel, especially within the secondary school context. Both distributed leadership and instructional leadership, when studied in isolation, have been shown to improve teacher attitudes and enhance school effectiveness. However, more recent scholarship points to the need for educational leadership that is integrated and relational, instructional, and organizational (Harris & Jones, 2018). In light of this theoretical shift, the current study contributes to the leadership scholarship by proposing and testing for the first time an integrated model of distributed-instructional leadership (DL-IL) as a predictor of teachers' organizational commitment.

Although distinguishable, both instructional leadership and distributed leadership are interrelated. According to Spillane and colleagues (2021), distributed leadership entails working together, having common responsibilities, and the allocation of leadership tasks to the multiple roles and professionals in the school. On the other hand, instructional leadership focuses more on the alignment of the school's curriculum, teaching and supervision of the instruction, and the principal's fostering of a school culture that assumes the school is a learning organization (Hallinger, 2011). Each of the models, when practiced in isolation, addresses only a portion of the leadership-commitment. The distributed form of leadership may deepen teachers' empowerment and collegial trust, but may not sustain instructional coherence, while the more instructional leadership may strengthen coherence in pedagogy but may also suppress teachers' autonomy if it is practiced in a more centralized form.

Combining instructional leadership with distributed leadership enables schools to strike the ideal balance between providing autonomy and guidance, a unique element that fosters

organizational commitment in teachers. Within the SET framework, distributed leadership stimulates teachers' engagement and loyalty to the school by fostering richer relational exchanges through trust, participation, and respect. Instructional leadership further advances this phenomenon by augmenting relational task exchanges through instructional leadership, fostering teachers' organizational sense of competence, and providing feedback, professional development, and other forms of organizational support. Instruction and Distributed Leadership under the SET theory create an environment of reciprocal engagement that enhances professional and instructional relational support and is likely to result in sustained affective organizational commitment (Cropanzano et al, 2017).

There might not be an abundance of empirical evidence demonstrating the integration of leadership, but what evidence exists shows the impact of integrating leadership on developing countries. Recent evidence shows that schools which have collaborative leadership and strong instructional leadership report higher levels of teacher engagement, trust, and organizational cohesion (Tian et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). Much of the existing literature, however, still views leadership models in isolation creating a considerable gap in understanding how the interplay of their singular and collective effects shape the organizational attitudes of teachers. This gap in literature inspires the present study, which investigates the combined influence of distributed and instructional leadership on teachers' organizational commitment.

The integration of DL and IL is particularly applicable in secondary schools, where there is high instructional complexity, subject specialization, and departmentalization. In such contexts, there is a need for both distributed professional expertise and focused instructional leadership. Teachers in subject-based departments need the distributed leadership practices that acknowledge their disciplinary expertise and collaborative problem-solving, while also demanding the instructional alignment and academic coherence that come from strong instructional leadership (Harris, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2020). Thus, an integrated leadership approach at least on the surface fits the structural and pedagogical realities of secondary education more than single-model frameworks.

The need for integrated leadership in the context of Karachi secondary schools is well-justified. There is a tendency for schools to fall within covert bureaucratic constraints, fully centralized decision-making structures, and examination accountability systems that constrain teachers' participation and professional autonomy. At the same time, a lack of instructional supervision and the absence of consistent professional development opportunities undercut the quality of teaching and the morale of teachers (Akhtar, 2024). In such conditions, solely providing formal incentives is unlikely to secure a sustained long-term commitment. Rather, leadership that builds trust, participation, and instructional scaffolding are positive motivators and sources of organizational attachment (OECD, 2019).

Overall, this study adds to the body of literature on educational leadership by transcending the single-model approach and proposing an integrated DL-IL framework based on Social Exchange Theory. The study adds to leadership theory and suggests ways to enhance practitioner leadership by gaining insights on the active interrelationship of leadership practices and teachers' commitment to an organization. This becomes essential for policymakers in creating a sustainable organization within the stressors of urban secondary schools.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

This research draws on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and postulates that principals' leadership practices serve as pivotal organizational stimuli influencing teachers'

organizational commitment. The framework is underpinned by the notion that leadership within SET is conceptualized as a unilateral process whereby teachers emotionally attune and commit to their schools because of the positive exchange relationships that are cultivated as a result of supportive, inclusive, and instructional leadership (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In this regard, both constructs of distributed and instructional leadership are treated as separate, yet intertwined, forms of leadership that together impact teachers' organizational commitment. Instead of analyzing these models of leadership singularly, the study brings them together under a unified leadership framework, which is in line with contemporary leadership research that advocates for the integration of leadership models within complex school systems (Harris & Jones, 2018; Hallinger, 2020). The framework suggests that leadership practices that combine both models of collaborative and instructional leadership are more likely to cultivate commitment than practices that are singular in focus.

Distributed Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Distributed leadership is a form of leadership that encourages a shift from a singular form of leadership to one with multiple leaders horizontally within an organization. This encourages responsibility sharing, cooperation in decision making, and participation of educators in leadership roles. This is contextualized within a Social Exchange Theory lens where, when principals practice role distribution in leadership and value teachers' professional qualifications, they reflect trust and respect and encourage positive relational exchanges (Spillane et al. 2021). Teachers who perceive leadership as shared are most likely to feel a sense of belonging and identification with school to a greater extent and in this sense, their affective organizational commitment will grow.

Studies have also shown that organizational commitment of teachers can be positively impacted by distributed leadership with professional trust, empowerment, and collective efficacy (Tian et al. 2016). In high school settings, as teachers are often specialized in one subject, distributed leadership is of greater use as it allows teachers to have substantive participation in organizational and instructional decisions. This emotional bond to the institution will be positive. Given the empirical and theoretical frameworks discussed, the following can be hypothesized:

H₁: *Distributed leadership has a significant positive effect on teachers' organizational commitment.*

Instructional Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Instructional leadership is defined as leadership behavior focused on teaching and learning through the control of the curriculum, supervision of instruction, and continuing professional education of the staff. Within the boundaries of the SET framework, Hallinger (2011) defines instructional leadership as a form of transactional, task-oriented exchange whereby principals offer instructional assistance, feedback, and guidance on academics in exchange for teachers' commitment and engagement on instruction and sustained participation on the teaching activities. Teachers are more likely to strengthen their organizational loyalty and commitment if they perceive school leaders' devotion to instructional improvement and professional advancement as a reciprocal relationship.

There is an abundance of studies that have documented a positive relationship between instructional leadership and teachers' organizational commitment particularly on the affective domain (Leithwood et al., 2020). It has been documented that in a context like the Karachi secondary schools where there is lack of instructional supervision because of the

administrative load, the leadership is likely to be the main source of support and motivation. Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

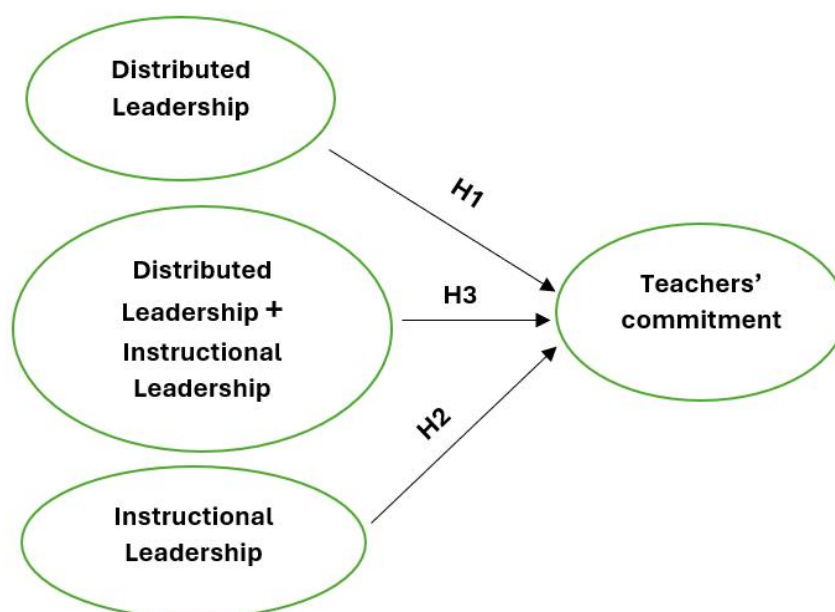
H₂: *Instructional leadership has a positive significant influence on teachers' organizational commitment.*

Merged Distributed Instructional Leadership and Organizational Commitment

In the absence of the combined effects of distributed leadership and instructional leadership, this study assumes that integration of both types of leadership has a greater combined impact and is more lasting on teachers' commitment to the organization. The combined DL-IL framework assumes that distributed leadership builds relational trust and professional inclusion, while instructional leadership offers pedagogical and instructional clarity. Together, these leadership practices form a balanced leadership that fulfills both the relational and the instructional needs of teachers.

From the Social Exchange Theory standpoint, integrated leadership enhances the exchange relationships through the combination of relational and task-based exchange, which increases the possibility of reciprocal commitment responses. Teachers who are both empowered and supported instructionally are more likely to establish a greater emotional bond and commitment to their schools. The integrated approach is more pertinent to secondary schools, where the instructional complexity calls for collective efficacy with a sound instructional leadership (Harris, 2013; Hallinger, 2020). Empirical testing of this model hinges on Leithwood et al. (2020) recent call within the leadership domain for more nuanced and comprehensive leadership models that take into consideration the complexities existing at the level of school organizations. In line with such a comprehensive outlook, the following hypotheses can be formulated.

H₃: *Integrated models of distributed and instructional leadership are likely to have a more pronounced positive impact on teachers' commitment to the organization compared to the models of distributed leadership and/or instructional leadership standing alone.*



MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and Procedures

Information was gathered from secondary school teachers within both public and private sectors in Karachi, Pakistan. Given the issues with access and limited time, convenience

sampling was utilized. A Google Form was created with a link to the survey, which was shared with around 1,000 secondary school teachers in the Karachi area.

Demographics of the Respondents

Out of 635 secondary school teachers which completed the survey, 499 valid responses were kept after missing data and outliers were filtered. The characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	71	14.2
	Female	428	85.8
Age (years)	< 25	67	13.4
	26–35	187	37.5
	36–45	165	33.1
	46–55	65	13.0
	> 55	15	3.0
Teaching Experience (years)	< 1	31	6.2
	1–5	192	38.5
	6–10	102	20.4
	11–15	86	17.2
	16–20	41	8.2
Workplace Type	Government / Public	236	47.3
	Private	263	52.7

Measures

The present study used the same validated construct measurement tools utilized by other educational leadership scholars. All responses utilized a 5-point Likert-type scale of agreement, a measurement of 1 indicating Strongly Disagree, and 5 indicating Strongly Agree.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional Leadership was measured by Hallinger and Murphy’s (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger et al., 2013; Hallinger et al., 2015). This instrument is the most cited and acknowledged scale for measuring instruction about leadership and has received over 200 validations within 26 countries. This scale has also been used by the OECD for the measurement of instructionally effective principals (Bellibaş, 2015). This study also measured the PIMRS instrument. The PIMRS also had an excellent reliability with a value of $\alpha = 0.979$.

Distributed Leadership

The distributed leadership survey used in this study was developed and validated by Özer, & Beycioğlu, (2013) and adopted by Kiliç, (2014), Yilmaz, & Beycioğlu, (2017), Ertürk, & Nartgün,(2019), Hilal, Hammad, & Polatcan,(2022) and Polatcan,(2024). This scale covered factors on the distribution of leadership, shared decision-making, and the collaboration for and the responsibilities of the entire school staffs. In this study, the scale on distributed leadership also showed strong inter-item consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.916.

Teachers’ Organizational Commitment

The scale on teachers’ commitment was based on Benkhoff (1997), as also adopted and validated by Vandenabeele (2009), Gheitani et al. (2019), and Giauque and Varone (2019). This measures the extent to which teachers feel emotionally attached and keen to stay within the organization, as well as the extent to which they identify with the objectives of the

organization. This used a five-point Likert scale to measure this dimension. This also showed satisfactory internal consistency in this study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.836.

Data analysis

Cresswell (2014) explains that this study utilized a cross-sectional research design and the philosophy of positivism, and analysis of the data employed the SPSS and AMOS computer software version 22. For the analysis of the data, SPSS was utilized to perform basic descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis to understand the characteristics of the respondents and the initial associations between the variables of the study. Using AMOS, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to measure the variables of the study to assess reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the variables. After that, the hypothesized relationships were evaluated, and the effect of distributed leadership and instructional leadership on the organizational commitment of teachers was analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Awang, 2012).

Measurement Model Evaluation (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to establish construct reliability and validity for the three latent variables: Distributed Leadership (DL), Instructional Leadership (IL), and Organizational Commitment (OC).

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Distributed Leadership	DL1	.740	.916	.917	.527
	DL2	.671			
	DL3	.622			
	DL4	.636			
	DL5	.766			
	DL6	.734			
	DL7	.791			
	DL8	.768			
	DL9	.736			
	DL10	.774			
Organizational Commitment	OC1	.702	.836	.844	.645
	OC2	.899			
	OC3	.796			
Instructional Leadership	IL1	.850	.901	.979	.681
	IL2	.835			
	IL3	.847			
	IL4	.857			
	IL5	.863			
	IL6	.852			
	IL7	.809			
	IL8	.829			



IL9	.833
IL10	.811
IL11	.771
IL12	.808
IL13	.819
IL14	.836
IL15	.847
IL16	.827
IL17	.852
IL18	.845
IL19	.803
IL20	.811
IL21	.791
IL22	.779

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics illustrate moderate-to-high perceptions of leadership behaviors and organizational commitment.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations, And Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	2.55	0.97	1						
2. Gender	1.86	0.35	.046	1					
3. Workplace Type	1.53	0.50	.160**	.166**	1				
4. Teaching Experience	3.11	1.41	.722**	.032	.209**	1			
5. Distributed Leadership (DL)	3.87	0.89	-.074	-.051	.052	-.042	1		
6. Instructional Leadership (IL)	3.85	0.76	-.049	-.014	.146**	-.059	.209**	1	
7. Organizational Commitment (OC)	3.78	1.01	-.063	.089*	.081	-.052	.277**	.199**	1

Note: DL= Distributed leadership, IL=Instructional Leadership, OC= Teachers Organizational Commitment.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Structural Path Coefficients (Direct and Combined Effects)

Hypothesis	Structural Relationship	Standardized β	p-value	Result
H1	Distributed Leadership \rightarrow Organizational Commitment	0.16	.003	Supported
H2	Instructional Leadership \rightarrow Organizational Commitment	0.14	.015	Supported
H3	Distributed Leadership + Instructional Leadership \rightarrow Organizational Commitment	0.30	< .001	Supported

Instructional Leadership
→ Organizational
Commitment (Combined
Model)

Discussions, Limitations and Implications

Discussion

In this study, the independent and combined effects of distributed and instructional leadership on teachers' organizational commitment within Karachi's secondary schools is investigated. Utilizing Social Exchange Theory, the study responds to calls within the leadership in education literature for an integrated leadership model that incorporates the relations and the instructional elements that are required for today's schools. In general, the study's results confirm the proposed integrated model of distributed and instructional leadership and add to the theory and practice of leadership in secondary schools within an urban setting.

The data suggest that distributed leadership positively influences teachers' organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = .003$), hence, Hypothesis 1 is supported. This means that leadership that focuses on shared decision making, collaboration, and the delegation of leadership roles increases the emotional commitment and loyalty of teachers to their schools. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, distributed leadership generates relational exchanges that are positive by signaling trust, respect, and a degree of professional recognition. When teachers gain involvement in the leadership and decision-making processes of the school, they see themselves as integral members of the organization, which in turn, heightens their belonging and obligation to the school (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This positive relational theory explains why distributed leadership enhances organizational commitment.

This study further advances previous studies that confirm range of leadership and teacher commitment relationship. For example, Hulpia et al. (2009) claimed that leadership distribution increases teachers' affective commitment by leadership support and collaboration. In another study, Tian et al. (2016) claimed that commitment to an organization is increased by distributed leadership through collective professional trust which positive influenced professional relationships. Recently conducted studies in various educational settings also confirm that teachers' organizational commitment is heightened through leadership distribution. This is especially evident in secondary schools characterized by a high level of division of subjects and teaching responsibilities among educators (Leithwood et al., 2020; Spillane et al., 2021). In the context of Karachi, where schools are commonly organized within highly centralized and hierarchical administrative structures, the benefits of distributed leadership are evident. In such bureaucratic structures, by enabling teachers to take on leadership roles, principals have the opportunity to break the bureaucratic inflexibility and provide a more inclusive organizational climate, and this nurtures teachers' commitment even in under-resourced settings.

The research further demonstrated that instructional leadership positively impacts teachers' organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = .015$), thereby confirming Hypothesis 2. This indicates how leadership centered on pedagogical practices, instructional oversight, curricular coherence, and ongoing training are beneficial. Instructional leadership is viewed from a task-oriented exchange perspective. Principals who offer instructional leadership, along with organizational feedback and professional development opportunities, demonstrate organizational support for teachers' fundamental responsibilities, and in return, they are

expected to increase their organizational loyalty, engagement, and commitment to the school (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Wayne et al., 2009). This corresponds to the vast body of research conducted in different parts of the world which underscored the association instructional leadership bears to positive outcomes for teachers. As reported by Robinson et al. (2008), instructional leadership is among the most prominent leadership practices that shape the level of teachers' commitment and quality of instruction. This was echoed by Hallinger (2020) who argued that the consistent attention of principals to instructional leadership enhances teachers' organizational citizenship and professional commitment.

Research carried out in the developing world suggests that in situations where there is a scarcity of opportunities for professional development and supportive instructional systems, the role of instructional leadership in fostering teacher commitment is especially crucial (Bush, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). In the Karachi secondary schools, instructional leadership is particularly important due to the focus on examinations in the education system and the lack of provision of ongoing instructional support. Principals practicing instructional leadership are able to alleviate these difficulties by bringing to bear clarity, direction, and professional support, thus strengthening teachers' commitment in the face of systemic inequities.

Theoretical Implications

Several notable contributions to scholarship on educational leadership and educational organizations are possible due to the findings of this study. First is the extension of Social Exchange Theory (SET) into educational contexts as this study systematically demonstrates the ways leadership practices act as reciprocal exchange mechanisms affecting the organization commitment of teachers. The study makes SET garnered through school leadership scholarship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) educational and validates SET through school leadership research by demonstrating teachers' commitment reciprocity through leadership behaviors exhibiting trust, empowerment, and instructional support. This study advances leadership theory by going beyond the single-model leadership frameworks. Most of the literature, including educational leadership, tends to compartmentalize the constructs of distributed leadership and instructional leadership, but this study validates what has been described by recent theorizing as leadership complementarity in complex organizations (Harris, 2013; Harris & Jones, 2019) through an integrated validated model of distributed-instructional leadership. The evidence suggests that leadership strategies are complementary and co-exist to produce superior organizational outcomes.

This longitudinal study adds to the literature on context-sensitive leadership by embedding empirical data derived from under-researched developing contexts. Research on educational leadership continues to be dominated by Western literature. By concentrating on the case of secondary schools in Karachi, this study adds to empirical leadership theory the experiences of dense urban settings confronted with administrative complexities, bureaucratic pressures, and scarce public provision (Bush, 2013; Hallinger, 2020). This makes a significant contribution to theory on cross-cultural contexts in leadership. By demonstrating leadership integration as a significant antecedent, this study advances the theory on teacher organizational commitment. This study illustrates how teacher commitment is influenced, not merely, by individual as well as structural considerations, but by leadership practices which integrate relational and instructional aspects. This is a complex perspective in school environments with a refined theory of commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Practical Implications

This study's findings have practical implications for school leaders, policymakers, and education administrators, particularly those working within the urban secondary school

context of Karachi. The findings indicate the necessity of integrating leadership development that moves beyond mere administrative and compliance leadership training as provided in the current professional development programs for school principals. Professional development within the frameworks of leadership and distributed leadership, such as school collaboration, delegation, empowerment of teachers, and practices of instructional leadership in the areas of curriculum supervision, professional development of teachers, and instructional leadership (Robinson et al., 2008) must take place. There is a need for the reconsideration of policies on the appointment and evaluation of principals. Furthermore, leadership frameworks must focus on the building of collaborative school cultures that enhance instructional practices, and selection of principals should not be based on seniority or administrative experience alone. Improvements in evaluation frameworks centered on professional trust and instructional guidance related to teachers may lead to increased leadership effectiveness and higher levels of sustained engagement from teachers (OECD, 2019).

Schools ought to create and institute forms of teacher leadership that form the basis for structures, such as committees centered on individual subjects, teams for instruction, and communities for professional development. Teachers' valuation of their profession and ties to the organization are strengthened in relation to participation opportunities within leadership and to information aligned to the exercises of the leadership in the organization (Hulpia et al. 2009). In cash-poor settings characterized by the absence of financial or material incentives, the use of relational and instructional leadership practices as cost-effective means to enhance teacher commitment are the counter-productive practices. Integrated leadership is therefore more applicable within the public and low-fee private school settings as principals are able to foster trust, relational and professional recognition, and support without the need of financial resources (Leithwood et al. 2020). The same applies to the insights from the study regarding education policy reforms within the Pakistani context. The use of integrated leadership practices to enhance the commitment of teachers to the organization will have a positive effect on teacher retention, the quality of instruction provided, and the overall organization's stability. Leadership as the main school improvement focus should be a priority for policy makers to respond to the need of establishing leadership within the school in a more systemic way in the large urban centers in education in crisis (Akhtar 2024).

This research study incorporated Social Exchange Theory to form and assess an integrated distributed-instructional leadership framework to evaluate organizational commitment of teachers in secondary schools in Karachi. The research results show that both distributed and instructional leadership positively influence organizational commitment of teachers and the impact is greater and more positive when both are combined. The results show that leadership practices that include relational inclusion and instructional support create a positive exchange that promotes a sense of trust, professional worth, and enduring commitment among teachers. By validating leadership complementarity, the research broadens the leadership literature beyond single-model approaches and provides urban secondary schools in Pakistan with unique context-specific evidence. The research demonstrates the need for integrated leadership practices that provide teaching instruction and empower teachers in their role to significantly enhance organizational commitment for the educational sector with limited resources.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are inequalities which must be enumerated in future efforts in this study. A first limitation is that cross-sectional designs do not permit making causal inferences about the relationships between different leadership practices and teachers' organizational commitment.

Future efforts in this area will need to adopt longitudinal and time-lag designs to analyze the effects of leadership over time. A second limitation is the self-reported questionnaire data which may introduce common method bias and subjectivity. Future research could achieve a higher quality of measurement by incorporating multi-source data such as reports from principals, classroom observation data, or indicators from the school level. A third limitation involves the use of a non-probability sampling design which constrains the findings to the secondary schools in Karachi and limits the ability to generalize beyond that context. It is recommended that more replication studies be done which use probability sampling designs and that are multi-region across Pakistan and in similar settings. Lastly, this study only considered the direct and joint effects of distributed and instructional leadership. Other studies should consider the mediating and moderating effects of: teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, school climate, and organizational justice, as well as other frameworks of leadership.

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