The Relationship between Perceived Leadership Styles of Principals and Teacher Retention and Satisfaction

Leroy Hamilton, Jr.1* and Berkley N. King, Jr.1

1School of Education, Norfolk State University, Norfolk Virginia, USA.

ABSTRACT

Approximately 33% of beginning public school teachers in the United States leave the profession before completing their first year in the classroom [1] and nearly 50% of new teachers leave the profession after only 5 years [2]. The literature review explicated factors of the possible interrelationship between teacher satisfaction, retention, and leadership of building principals. Data were collected through cross-sectional surveys that measured attitudes and practices [3]. The independent variable was the leadership traits of the building principal. The dependent variable was job satisfaction that was measured by surveys distributed as the primary instrument for gathering data within the given population. The population for the study was K-12 teachers in five school districts from the coastal region of Virginia. A positive correlation was found between teacher job satisfaction and the principal’s leadership score; \( r (298) = .63, p = .001 \). The findings support the study’s main hypothesis. In addition, in comparing the unique contribution of the school that the teacher worked at and the teachers’ perception of their principal’s leadership, leadership style had 17 times more explaining power (35.8% vs. 2.0%) for the variation in the teachers’ job satisfaction score. Thus, the key finding of the study indicated a
relationship between perceived leadership styles of principals and teacher retention and satisfaction.
Preservice and in-service K-12 educational leaders may be able to apply the findings from the study to help improve teacher retention.

Keywords: Commitment; job satisfaction; relationship; educational leaders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Approximately 33% of beginning public school teachers in the United States leave the profession before completing their first year in the classroom [1] and nearly 50% of new teachers leave the profession after only 5 years [2]. The nationwide cost of replacing teachers who either leave the profession or change schools is nearly $5 billion a year [4]. Kleinman [5] found teaching and nursing attract similar personnel and determined the retention of nurses is associated with the perception of the leadership styles of their managers. However, there is a lack of research regarding how the leadership styles of principals affect the retention of teachers. Schneider [6] suggested there may be a link between teacher retention and the influence of teacher job satisfaction to teacher commitment. The problem is it is not known if principal leadership style as perceived by teachers is a factor in teachers’ decisions to stay or leave the profession. This quantitative correlational study determines the relationship between the perceived leadership style of a principal and teacher job satisfaction. Preservice and in-service K-12 administrators may be able to apply the findings from the study to help improve teacher retention.

Teacher attrition affects the future of society. An investigation was necessary to explore possible reasons teachers leave their profession. Osunde and Izevdigie [7] noted teachers are not well remunerated and are often denigrated by other professionals with similar educational backgrounds. This situation often leads to low self-esteem and a low status of both teachers and the teaching profession in American society. As a result, the traditional respect and prestige once enjoyed by teachers in the United States have been eroded [8], which likely contributes to a loss of interest and attraction to the teaching profession. Teacher attrition is of concern to most school districts [9]. Because a relationship exists between perceived leadership styles of the principal and the retention of teachers, educational leadership programs may be able to assist future and current principals to make adjustments to accommodate the needs of the school system. The study adds to the existing literature examining the relationship between principal leadership traits and teacher job satisfaction. The findings may serve organizations researching strategies for retaining teachers.

The purpose of the quantitative correlational study was to determine the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and teacher-perceived leadership traits of principals within public schools (K-12) in the coastal region of Virginia. The significance of the relationship is that it may inform an understanding of how teacher leadership influences teacher retention, which has been highly correlated to satisfaction [10]. The study used the MLQ by Bass and Avolio [11] and the Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction Survey by Mertler [12], which are recognized as valid and reliable means to measure the variables under investigation.

The study focused on several paradigms that embraced Herzberg’s [13] theory of hygiene and motivation. The selected theory offers rationales that identify factors that influence the positive and negative behavioral attitudes most associated with school personnel. The study was framed in the context of previous research in the area of leadership influences on teacher retention. Herzberg [14,13] established a perspective on understanding contributing factors that influence the attitudes of employees. Previous research indicated a need to understand how to attract, motivate, and retain seasonal employees [15]. Agencies might use Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory as a basis for designing strategies for recruitment, job design, and development of personnel [16]. Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory indicates different factors influence extreme job satisfaction [17].

Net MBA [18] used Herzberg’s theory to determine the factors in a school environment that caused teacher satisfaction. The study associated factors that satisfy teachers as motivators while linking things that dissatisfy to
hygiene factors. Hygiene is the maintenance factors necessary to avoid dissatisfaction but that by themselves do not provide satisfaction [14]. Thompson [19] noted, “Job factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, possibility of advancement, and salary have a relationship with job satisfaction” (p. 40). Although numerous factors influence job satisfaction, past studies have shown significant correlation between job satisfaction and the perception of the personality and leadership styles of the employer [20,21,19].

Berry and Hirsch [20] found that schools in the United States are having difficulty filling vacancies and that more than 30% of teachers with all levels of experience report they are dissatisfied with their chosen profession and are considering quitting or retiring [21]. Therefore, this study sought to understand important issues, perspectives, and controversies in the field of education that influence the variables most associated with teacher attrition [22], in particular how the perception of leadership relates to teacher satisfaction. According to Luthans [23], leadership is a social influence process and cannot exist without a leader and one or more followers. In addition, leadership elicits voluntary action on the part of followers, which separates leadership from other types of influence based on formal authority. Finally, leadership results in followers’ behavior that is purposeful and goal directed in some sort of organized setting. The precise nature of leadership and its relationship to key criteria variables such as subordinate satisfaction, commitment, and performance are still uncertain, and, according to Luthans, leadership remains “an ‘black box’ or unexplainable concept” (p. 45).

Educational leadership requires leaders to demonstrate various levels of ability to lead under the pressures of diverse situations within school environments. As an educational leader, successful guidance requires the ability to analyze the competencies, abilities, and commitments of subordinates. As a result, building principals might benefit from an assessment and evaluation of how their leadership style affects their personnel. Various studies have suggested effective guidance may enhance the praxis of educational leaders. Educational leaders should be able to apply theory that examines relationships between particular situations and leadership that requires behavioral adjustment on the leader’s role [24]. Fullan [25] posited “only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement” (p. 16). Therefore, educational leadership requires school principals to demonstrate administrative talents with thought patterns that contribute to successful achievements.

Cunningham and Cordeiro [26] indicated a leader’s decision making should be carried out through stages instead of abruptly implementing change, because it could set the tone for “how key decisions are made that touch the core functions” (p. 121) in the future. Additionally, Kezar [27] posited “involves listening to people throughout the organization and including their interest; agendas are responsive to stakeholder concerns” (p. 42). As a result, leaders must be able to think critically and creatively while communicating and interacting within groups. Leaders skilled in critical thinking are able to take followers’ thinking apart systematically, assess it for quality, and then prove it [28].

A major challenge facing school districts in the United States is the shortage of teaching personnel attributed to, teacher attrition and the inability to attract qualified teachers [29]. Many capable individuals are reluctant to enter the teaching profession due to several perceived factors. These include, but are not limited to, the uncertainty caused by the apparent capriciousness of requirements needed to satisfy state- mandated programs [30] and the perception of school violence at every level of education [31]. Finally, an additional factor that may contribute to teacher attrition is the amount of support received from building school principals [32]. “Elementary, middle school, and high school principals have a powerful impact on the schools in their charge. The current teacher shortage combined with the demands of standards-based education place a strain on the teacher-principal relationship” [32]. Teachers require special support from educational leaders to ensure they become highly qualified veteran teachers, rather than casualties of teacher attrition [32].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Correlation was selected as the preferred method of investigation over other potential research methods. Quantitative designs describe, test, and explain whereas qualitative designs explore and comprehend [3]. The correlational study examined variables in their
natural environments and does not include researcher-imposed treatments. Data were collected through cross-sectional surveys that measured attitudes and practices [3]. The independent variable is the leadership traits of the building principal. The dependent variable is job satisfaction that was measured by surveys distributed as the primary instrument for gathering data within the given population.

A Correlational study was appropriate because the variables in this study could not be manipulated or controlled [10]. This correlational study identified complex relationships and multifactors that explain an outcome. The established instruments used to survey participants' responds was the the MLQ and Teacher Motivation and Job Satisfaction Survey. The instruments have been validated and tested for reliability by their creators, Bass and Avolio [11] and Mertler [12], respectively. Both instruments were used in the study.

The following research question guided the study: What is the relationship between teacher satisfaction and the perceived leadership style of principals?

The following hypotheses were tested:

H1A: There is no relationship between teacher job satisfaction and the perceived leadership style of principals.

H10: There is a relationship between teacher job satisfaction and the perceived leadership style of principals.

The population for the study was K-12 teachers in 5 school districts from the coastal region of Virginia. There are 28 school districts in the coastal region. The participants were teachers with 1 to 25 years of teaching experience who attended in-service workshops during the time the study was conducted. The sample size was 300 teachers. Approximately 30 minutes was allocated for teachers to complete the survey. After data was obtained, quantitative software SPSS, version 12 assisted with the analyses.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of qualified and committed teachers in public education. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the relationship between a teachers’ (K-12) job satisfaction and teachers’ perceived leadership traits of principals within public schools. The study was conducted in the coastal region of Virginia. The significance of the relationships may inform an understanding of how teacher leadership influences teacher retention. The study used validated and reliable attitudinal measures to assess the variables under investigation.

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the 18 teacher satisfaction ratings. The ratings were given using a 5-point metric (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied). The items given the highest rated satisfaction levels were Item 17, interpersonal relationships with students (M = 3.89), and Item 5, interpersonal relationships with colleagues (M = 3.85). The items given the lowest job satisfaction among the teachers were Item 6, salary (M = 2.77), and Item 12, district policies (M = 2.90). The 18 job satisfaction items were combined into an aggregated scale (M = 3.50, SD = 0.71). The resulting Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was r = .93, which suggested a high level of internal reliability.

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the 20 ratings the participating teachers gave for their principal’s leadership style. The ratings were given using a 5-point metric (0 = not at all to 4 = frequently, if not always). Three of the items (Items 2, 7, and 17) were reverse scored because a rating of not at all was considered the most favorable response.

Leadership items with the highest rated frequency were Item 15, displays a sense of power and confidence (M = 3.29), and Item 17, which had been reversed scored: [Does not] avoid making decisions (M = 3.28). Leadership behaviors that were least frequently noted were Item 9, spends time teaching and coaching (M = 1.41), and Item 19, suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments (M = 2.03). The 20 leadership ratings were combined into an aggregated scale (M = 2.66, SD = 0.79). The resulting Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was r = .94, which suggested an adequate level of internal reliability.

Hypothesis 1: Hypothesis 1 posited there is a relationship between teacher satisfaction and the perceived leadership style of principals. To test Hypothesis 1, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed between the aggregated teacher satisfaction score and the aggregated principal leadership style score. The resulting correlation was significant, r(298) = .63, p = .001 providing support for Hypothesis 1.
Table 1. Teacher satisfaction sorted by highest level of satisfaction (N = 300)

| Source of satisfaction                                      | M     | SD   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|
| 17. Interpersonal relationships with students               | 3.89  | 0.97 |
| 5. Interpersonal relationships with colleagues              | 3.85  | 0.94 |
| 7. Job security                                              | 3.81  | 0.96 |
| 14. Responsibility                                           | 3.79  | 0.96 |
| 1. Overall satisfaction                                     | 3.77  | 1.08 |
| 10. Sense of achievement                                    | 3.64  | 1.03 |
| 3. Potential for professional growth                        | 3.60  | 1.00 |
| 13. Teacher evaluation                                      | 3.59  | 0.98 |
| 9. Interpersonal relationships with administrators           | 3.57  | 1.00 |
| 4. Supervision by superiors                                 | 3.51  | 1.08 |
| 8. Status                                                   | 3.49  | 1.05 |
| 16. The profession itself                                   | 3.47  | 1.05 |
| 18. Sense of accountability                                 | 3.46  | 1.16 |
| 15. Potential for advancement                               | 3.43  | 1.02 |
| 2. Recognition                                              | 3.24  | 1.10 |
| 11. Working conditions                                      | 3.18  | 1.17 |
| 12. District policies                                       | 2.90  | 1.10 |
| 6. Salary                                                   | 2.77  | 1.11 |

*a Ratings based on five-point metric (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied)  
* Note. The 18 items combined yield a Cronbach reliability coefficient of r = .93

Table 2. Leadership behavior ratings sorted by highest frequency level (N = 300)

| Leadership behavior                                                                 | M  | SD  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|
| 15. Displays a sense of power and confidence                                         | 3.29| 0.83|
| 17. [Does not] avoid making decisions b                                               | 3.28| 1.07|
| 2. [Does not] avoid getting involved when important issues arise b                    | 3.21| 1.07|
| 8. Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished                         | 2.93| 0.97|
| 7. [Does not] wait for things to go wrong before taking action b                      | 2.87| 1.17|
| 16. Articulates a compelling vision of the future                                     | 2.87| 1.07|
| 14. Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions                         | 2.85| 1.05|
| 6. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets   | 2.76| 1.08|
| 11. Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group                                | 2.74| 1.03|
| 4. Uses methods of leadership that are satisfying                                     | 2.73| 1.05|
| 13. Acts in a way that builds my respect                                              | 2.68| 1.23|
| 12. Treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of the group              | 2.66| 1.29|
| 10. Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved    | 2.65| 1.13|
| 5. Instills price in me for being associated with him/her                              | 2.57| 1.34|
| 1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts                              | 2.55| 1.15|
| 3. Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems                                  | 2.51| 1.09|
| 20. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations                                    | 2.44| 1.31|
| 18. Helps me develop my strengths                                                     | 2.08| 1.24|
| 19. Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments                       | 2.03| 1.16|
| 9. Spends time teaching and coaching                                                  | 1.41| 1.29|

Note. The 20 items combined yield a Cronbach reliability coefficient of r = .94.  
a Ratings based on 5-point metric (0 = not at all to 4 = frequently, if not always).  
b Item was reverse scored. Bracketed words are included to improve understandability.
### 3.1 Additional Findings

Table 3 displays the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests for the teachers’ level of job satisfaction and their perception of their principal’s leadership style. The independent variable for both tests was which of the six schools they worked at. For confidentiality reasons, the names of the schools were changed to the letters A to F.

Significant differences in teacher satisfaction were noted among the six schools (Table 3). The one-way ANOVA model was statistically significant (p = .001) and the school location accounted for 7.0% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction. The Scheffe post hoc tests found the teachers at School D to have significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than the teachers at either School A (p = .008) or School B (p = .02).

Significant differences in the teacher’s perception of their principal’s leadership performance were noted among the six schools (Table 3). The one-way ANOVA model was statistically significant (p = .001) and the school location accounted for 13.6% of the variance in leadership behavior. The Scheffe post hoc tests found School D to have significantly lower principal leadership scores than either School A (p = .001) or School B (p = .001). In addition, School E had significantly lower principal leadership scores than did School A (p = .001).

Table 4 displays the results of the one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model predicting teacher job satisfaction based on their school and controlling for their principal’s leadership score. The overall model was significant (p = .001) and accounted for 40.3% of the variance in the teachers’ job satisfaction. The covariate (principal’s leadership score) was statistically significant (p = .001) but the main effect for school (p = .31) was not significant. Inspection of the partial eta squared coefficients (the unique percentage of variance accounted for by the variable) found the principal’s leadership score accounted for 35.8% of the variance in teacher satisfaction while the school that the teachers worked at accounted for only 2.0% of the variance (Table 4).

Table 5 displays the 18 Pearson product-moment correlations between the teacher’s individual job satisfaction ratings and the aggregated rating of the principal’s leadership behavior. All 18 correlations were statistically significant at the p < .001 level. The correlations ranged in size from r = .24 to r = .68 with a median correlation of r = .415. The highest individual correlations were for the aggregated leadership score with (a) interpersonal relationships with administrators (r = .68), (b) recognition (r = .60), and (c) supervision by superiors (r = .56).

#### Table 3. Comparison of teacher satisfaction and leadership behavior scores based on school using one-way ANOVA tests with Scheffe post hoc tests (N = 300)

| School | n   | M    | SD   | F    | p     |
|--------|-----|------|------|------|-------|
|        |     | Teacher satisfaction a |      |      |       |
| A      | 76  | 3.70 | 0.69 | 4.46 | .001  |
| B      | 38  | 3.75 | 0.78 |      |       |
| C      | 30  | 3.42 | 0.63 |      |       |
| D      | 58  | 3.22 | 0.74 |      |       |
| E      | 87  | 3.44 | 0.66 |      |       |
| F      | 11  | 3.35 | 0.65 |      |       |
| All schools | 300 | 3.50 | 0.71 |      |       |
|        |     | Leadership score b |     |      |       |
| A      | 76  | 3.07 | 0.70 | 9.29 | .001  |
| B      | 38  | 2.78 | 0.85 |      |       |
| C      | 30  | 2.73 | 0.78 |      |       |
| D      | 58  | 2.23 | 0.75 |      |       |
| E      | 87  | 2.52 | 0.73 |      |       |
| F      | 11  | 2.50 | 0.66 |      |       |
| All schools | 300 | 2.66 | 0.79 |      |       |

a Scheffe post hoc test: A > D (p = .008), B > D (p = .02); all other pairs of schools were not significantly different at the p < .05 level. R2 = .070.

b Scheffe post hoc test: A > D (p = .001), A > E (p = .001), B > D (p = .02); all other pairs of schools were not significantly different at the p < .05 level. R2 = .136
### Table 4. Prediction of teacher satisfaction based on school site adjusting for the principal’s leadership score using one-way ANCOVA test (N = 300)

| Source                     | SS      | df | MS   | F       | p      | Partial eta squared |
|----------------------------|---------|----|------|---------|--------|---------------------|
| Full model                 | 61.59   | 6  | 10.26| 32.96   | .001   | .403                |
| Leadership covariate       | 50.82   | 1  | 50.82| 163.22  | .001   | .358                |
| School a                   | 1.87    | 5  | 0.37 | 1.20    | .31    | .020                |
| Error                      | 91.24   | 293| 0.31 |         |        |                     |
| Total                      | 152.82  | 299|      |         |        |                     |

*a Bonferroni post hoc tests found no significant differences (p < .05) in teacher satisfaction after controlling for the principal’s leadership score.*

### Table 5. Pearson product-moment correlations among the principal’s total leadership score and the individual teacher job satisfaction items (N = 300)

| Job satisfaction item                      | Leadership |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Overall satisfaction                    | .40        |
| 2. Recognition                             | .60        |
| 3. Potential for professional growth       | .47        |
| 4. Supervision by superiors                | .56        |
| 5. Interpersonal relationships with colleagues | .35        |
| 6. Salary                                  | .29        |
| 7. Job security                            | .33        |
| 8. Status                                  | .34        |
| 9. Interpersonal relationships with administrators | .68        |
| 10. Sense of achievement                   | .39        |
| 11. Working conditions                     | .45        |
| 12. District policies                      | .48        |
| 13. Teacher evaluation                     | .45        |
| 14. Responsibility                         | .42        |
| 15. Potential for advancement              | .49        |
| 16. The profession itself                  | .41        |
| 17. Interpersonal relationships with students | .24        |
| 18. Sense of accountability                | .34        |

*Note. All correlations significant at the p < .001 level*

Table 6 displays the 20 Pearson product-moment correlations between the individual ratings of the principal’s leadership behavior and the aggregated job satisfaction rating for the teacher. All 20 correlations were statistically significant at the p < .001 level. The correlations ranged in size from r = .19 to r = .54 with a median correlation of r = .465. The highest individual correlations were for the aggregated job satisfaction score: (a) goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group (r = .54), (b) acts in a way that builds my respect (r = .52), (c) helps me develop my strengths (r = .52), and (d) expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations (r = .51).

Table 7 displays the results of the backward regression model predicting the teacher’s job satisfaction based on the 20 individual ratings for the leadership behavior ratings for the principal. The final five-variable model was statistically significant (p < .001) and accounted for 41.6% of the variance in the teacher’s job satisfaction. Specifically, the teacher’s job satisfaction was higher when the principal (a) discussed in specific terms who was responsible for achieving performance targets (p = .008), (b) did not wait for things to go wrong before taking action (p = .03), (c) went beyond self-interest for the good of the group (p = .001), (d) helped them develop their strengths (p = .04), and (e) expressed satisfaction when they met expectations (p = .001).

Table 7 displays the results of the backward regression model predicting the teacher’s job satisfaction based on the 20 individual ratings for the leadership behavior ratings for the principal. The final five-variable model was statistically significant (p < .001) and accounted for 41.6% of the variance in the teacher’s job satisfaction. Specifically, the teacher’s job satisfaction was higher when the principal (a) discussed in specific terms who was responsible for achieving performance targets (p = .008), (b) did not wait for things to go wrong before taking action (p = .03), (c) went beyond self-interest for the good of the group (p = .001), (d) helped them develop their strengths (p = .04), and (e) expressed satisfaction when they met expectations (p = .001).

In summary, a significant, positive correlation was found between teacher job satisfaction and the principal’s leadership score, which supported the study’s hypothesis. In addition, in comparing the unique contribution of the school that the teacher worked at and the teachers’ perception of their principal’s leadership, leadership style had 17 times more explaining power (35.8% vs. 2.0%) for the variation in the teacher’s job satisfaction score.
Table 6. Pearson product-moment correlations between the total job satisfaction score and the individual leadership behavior items (N = 300)

| Leadership behavior                                                                 | Job satisfaction |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts                           | .48              |
| 2. [Does not] avoid getting involved when important issues arise a                | .30              |
| 3. Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems                               | .40              |
| 4. Uses methods of leadership that are satisfying                                  | .47              |
| 5. Instills pride in me for being associated with him/her                            | .49              |
| 6. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving Performance target  | .47              |
| 7. [Does not] avoid getting involved when important issues arise a                | .39              |
| 8. Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished                       | .36              |
| 9. Spends time teaching and coaching                                               | .39              |
| 10. Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved | .46              |
| 11. Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group                              | .54              |
| 12. Treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of the Group           | .48              |
| 13. Acts in a way that builds my respect                                            | .52              |
| 14. Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions                      | .44              |
| 15. Displays a sense of power and confidence                                         | .36              |
| 16. Articulates a compelling vision of the future                                   | .46              |
| 17. [Does not] avoid making decisions                                              | .19              |
| 18. Helps me develop my strengths                                                  | .52              |
| 19. Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments                    | .47              |
| 20. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations                                 | .51              |

*a* Item was reverse scored. Bracketed words are included to improve understandability

Table 7. Prediction of teacher job satisfaction based on the ratings of the principal’s leadership behavior using backward elimination regression (N = 300)

| Variable                                                                 | B       | SE     | β     | P     | sr   | sr²   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Intercept                                                               | 2.15    | 0.11   | .001  |       |      |       |
| 6. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets | 0.10    | 0.04   | .15   | .008  | .12  | .01   |
| 7. [Does not] wait for things to go wrong before taking action a        | 0.07    | 0.03   | .12   | .03   | .10  | .01   |
| 11. Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group                 | 0.16    | 0.04   | .23   | .001  | .17  | .03   |
| 18. Helps me develop my strengths                                       | 0.08    | 0.04   | .14   | .04   | .09  | .01   |
| 20. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations                     | 0.11    | 0.03   | .20   | .001  | .14  | .02   |

Note. Final model: F (5, 294) = 41.88, p < .001. R² = .416. sr = semipartial correlation. *a* Item was reverse scored. Bracketed words are included to improve understandability.

4. CONCLUSION

A significant, positive correlation was found between teacher job satisfaction and the principal’s leadership score that supported the study’s main hypothesis. The descriptive statistics for the 18 teacher satisfaction ratings were given using a 5-point metric (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied). The items given the highest rated satisfaction levels were Item 17, interpersonal relationships with students (M = 3.89), and Item 5, interpersonal relationships with colleagues (M = 3.85). The items given the lowest job satisfaction among the teachers were Item 6, salary (M = 2.77), and Item 12, district policies (M = 2.90). The descriptive statistics for the 20 ratings the participating teachers gave for their principal’s leadership style were given using a 5-point metric (0 = not at all to 4 = frequently, if not always). Three of the items (Items 2, 7, and 17) were reverse scored because a rating of not at all was considered the most favorable response.

Leadership items with the highest rated frequency were Item 15, displays a sense of power and confidence (M = 3.29), and Item 17, which had been reversed scored: [Does not]
avoid making decisions (M = 3.28). Leadership behaviors that were least frequently noted were Item 9, spends time teaching and coaching (M = 1.41), and Item 19, suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments (M = 2.03).

Johnson [10] determined that principals are essential with regard to job satisfaction and teacher retention. In addition, in a comparison of the unique contribution of the school that the teacher worked at and the teacher's perception of the principal's leadership, leadership style had 17 times more explaining power (35.8% vs. 2.0%) for the variation in the teacher's job satisfaction score.

The descriptive statistics for the 18 teacher satisfaction ratings also revealed that teachers are most satisfied with the interpersonal relationships with students (M = 3.89) and the interpersonal relationships with colleagues (M = 3.85). Davis [33] revealed that relationships between students and teachers affect the overall classroom learning experiences of students. The 18 job satisfaction items were combined into an aggregated scale (M = 3.50, SD = 0.71). Moreover, students’ academic experiences are generally based on whether they perceived they had a good relationship with their teacher [34].

Alternatively, the study further revealed that teachers are least satisfied with salary (M = 2.77) and district policies (M = 2.90). The resulting Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was $r = .93$, indicating a high level of internal reliability. Consequently, factors of dissatisfaction encompass changes in educational policy and procedures and poor relationships with administrators [35].

Leadership behavior ratings, sorted by highest frequency level (N = 300), evaluated behaviors of the principals. The highest rating, based on a 5-point metric (0 = not at all to 4 = frequently, if not always), was associated with the principals' ability to display a sense of power and confidence. The lowest rating was attached to the principal's efforts to spend time teaching and coaching teachers.

Hypothesis 1 posited the following: There is a relationship between teacher satisfaction and the perceived leadership style of principals. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed between the aggregated teacher satisfaction score and the aggregated principal leadership style score. The resulting correlation was significant, $r (298) = .63, p = .001$, providing support for Hypothesis 1.

The study also used the results of the one-way ANOVA tests for the teachers' level of job satisfaction and the teachers' perception of their principal's leadership style. The independent variable for both tests was which of the six schools they worked at. For confidentiality reasons, the names of the schools were changed to the letters A to F.

Significant differences in teacher satisfaction were noted between the six schools. The one-way ANOVA model was statistically significant ($p = .001$) and the school location accounted for 7.0% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction. The Scheffe post hoc tests found the teachers at School D had significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than the teachers at either School A ($p = .008$) or School B ($p = .02$).

Significant differences in the teachers' perception of their principal's leadership performance were also noted between the six schools. The one-way ANOVA model was statistically significant ($p = .001$) and the school location accounted for 13.6% of the variance in leadership behavior. The Scheffe post hoc tests found School D to have significantly lower principal leadership scores than either School A ($p = .001$) or School B ($p = .001$). In addition, School E had significantly lower principal leadership scores than did School A ($p = .001$).

The result of the one-way ANCOVA model predicted teachers' job satisfaction based on their school and controlling for their principal's leadership score. The overall model was significant ($p = .001$) and accounted for 40.3% of the variance in the teacher's job satisfaction. The covariate (principal's leadership score) was statistically significant ($p = .001$), but the main effect for school ($p = .31$) was not significant. Inspection of the partial-eta-squared coefficients (the unique percentage of variance accounted for by the variable) found the principal's leadership score to account for 35.8% of the variance in teacher satisfaction while the school the teachers worked at accounted for only 2.0% of the variance.

Further analyses found correlations between the individual ratings of the principal's leadership behavior and the aggregated job satisfaction
rating for the teacher. All 20 correlations were statistically significant at the p < .001 level. The correlations ranged in size from r = .19 to r = .54 with a median correlation of r = .465. The highest individual correlations were for the aggregated job satisfaction score with (a) goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group (r = .54), (b) acts in a way that builds my respect (r = .52), (c) helps me develop my strengths (r = .52), and (d) expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations (r = .51).

The prediction of teacher job satisfaction was based on the ratings of the principals’ leadership behavior. The results of the backward regression model predicted the teachers’ job satisfaction based on the 20 individual ratings for the leadership behavior ratings for the principal. The final five-variable model was statistically significant (p < .001) and accounted for 41.6% of the variance in the teachers’ job satisfaction. Specifically, the teachers’ job satisfaction was higher when the principal (a) discussed in specific terms who was responsible for achieving performance targets (p = .8), (b) did not wait for things to go wrong before taking action (p = .03), (c) went beyond self-interest for the good of the group (p = .001), (d) helped them develop their strengths (p = .04), and (e) expressed satisfaction when they met expectations (p = .001).

Explanation of the Findings: The data agree with existing literature that teacher job satisfaction is associated with the perceived leadership style of the principal [36]. Educational leadership requires principals to demonstrate various levels of ability to lead under the pressures of diverse situations while incorporating support for teachers. As a result, building principals should be able to assess and evaluate the impact and perceptions of their leadership styles [24].

School districts in the United States continue to undergo high turnover rates of teaching personnel due to job dissatisfaction. Teacher attrition, caused by either changing positions or leaving the teaching profession altogether, is the largest factor determining demand for additional teachers in the United States [37]. Teacher attrition is an ongoing phenomenon in the education sector. Job dissatisfaction, due to poor salary, poor administrative support, and student discipline problems, is also among the most frequent reasons teachers give for leaving the profession [38,39,40].

In contrast, research in teacher education directs attention to teachers’ visions of education and their sense of calling, mission, and professional identity [41]. Correspondingly, many teachers choose to remain in the teaching profession to answer a calling or to join a vocation that offers an opportunity to define their professional identity in education [42]. As a result, teachers recognized for their excellence in teaching are generally educators dedicated to the profession and committed to their life calling [43].

Specifically, the teachers’ job satisfaction was higher when the principal discussed in specific terms who was responsible for achieving performance targets (p = .008). Mendez-Morse [44] revealed the success of urban schools is the presence of a skilled principal who creates a sense of shared mission around improving teaching and learning and delegates authority to educators who demonstrate skill for accomplishing duties and tasks. Principals who lead by sharing their visions impact teacher job satisfaction.

The findings from the results also support several paradigms of the study’s theoretical framework, which was Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory, and its dichotomy of satisfiers (motivators) and dissatisfier (hygiene factors) within the teaching profession. The theory focuses on 5 factors as strong determinants of job satisfaction that are intrinsic in nature and labeled as motivators and on 11 factors associated with job dissatisfaction that are extrinsic in nature and labeled as hygiene factors [45]. The study associated factors that satisfy teachers as motivators while linking things that dissatisfy to hygiene factors.

Surprisingly, one item from the results contradicts Herzberg’s theory but supports the literature on applicability of the theory in educational contexts is the role of interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction. Herzberg identified interpersonal relationships as dissatisfiers, whereas the findings from the results associated interpersonal relationships with students (M = 2.77) as a motivating factor and key element for job satisfaction. In contrast, hygiene matters are linked to teacher salary (M = 2.77) and district policies (M = 2.90). Hygiene factors are considered maintenance factors that are necessary to avoid dissatisfaction but that by themselves do not provide satisfaction [14].

The findings also revealed that teachers perceive leadership to be a determining factor for job
satisfaction. Johnson [10] determined that principals are essential with regard to job satisfaction and teacher retention. Consequently, school principals must remain current with leadership approaches and thought patterns that foster teachers’ sense of self-worth as professionals. Therefore, the perceived perceptions of the principal’s leadership style are vital to teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention.

The principals’ role continues to undergo adjustments as educational stakeholders combat measurements for school reform. The study reveals that effective principals display a sense of power and confidence while attempting to guide with teaching and coaching leadership methods. Existing literature acknowledges the demand for principals to shift roles and responsibilities, although principals remaining current within the leadership academy reflects additional concerns [35]. The principal position was historically viewed as a school manager. However, the position of principal is now accountable for instructional improvement, staff development, curriculum design, development and implementation of site-based decision-making plans, and complex discipline and school safety issues [46].

Significant differences in the teachers’ perception of their principal’s leadership performance were also noted. Richards [47] found that the principal is key to teachers’ perceptions of feeling supported with the profession. In this regard, principals should remain cognizant of their roles while training and retaining teachers [48,49]. According to the results, teachers require not only support from the principal, but also assistance with developing strengths within the teaching profession. Therefore, principals should attempt to impact the lives of teacher in a positive manner.

Teacher Commitment and Job Satisfaction: Brooke et al. [50] found a strong correlation between teacher commitment and job satisfaction. Brief [51] defined job satisfaction as “the extent that an employee favors or disfavors a job” (p. 86). Moreover, commitment has also been linked to improved performance within an organizational context [52]. Accordingly, job satisfaction can be linked to organizational commitment and performance [53]. As a result, improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment was determined as the primary factor in reducing turnover intentions [54]. Teacher commitment refers to identification with, and involvement in, the teaching profession [55] and is associated with the development of and dedication to career goals [56]. Teacher commitment refers to motivation toward the chosen vocation [57]. Therefore, teachers committed to their careers tend to experience more subjective career success (e.g., have more positive feelings for the career) than do teachers who are less committed [58]. In comparison, Carson et al. [59] found medical librarians high on career commitment to have higher career satisfaction than those low on career commitment. In addition, in a meta-analytic study of occupational commitment, Lee et al. [60] found career commitment to correlate most positively with career satisfaction.

Applebaum [61] determined that charismatic leadership and job satisfaction had a profound influence on commitment and retention. Moreover, teachers experience varying levels of commitment and satisfaction according to their perceptions of context factors such as training, promotion, work scheduling, leadership practices, and social integration [62]. Therefore, leadership is associated with teacher retention and job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are common research topics in leadership [63]. Job satisfaction is the extent to which a teacher feels negatively or positively about the teaching profession [64]. Alternatively, organizational commitment refers to the degree to which an individual identifies with an organization’s goals and plans to remain with the organization [65]. Both satisfaction and commitment are multifaceted concepts that can possibly be derived from feelings of accomplishment and self-actualization as a result of performing a job or from such rewards as compensation or job security [66]. Organizational commitment is more calculative in nature and reflects accumulated interests (e.g., pensions) that bind an employee to the organization [66]. As a result, there is a positive association between job satisfaction and organization commitment [67]. The analysis of the data illustrated a significant relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ leadership style and teachers’ level of job satisfaction.

Fundamentally, the study examined three pieces of information: leadership score, job satisfaction score, and the participating schools. Both instruments were tested and found reliable. The
18-item teacher satisfaction scale resulted in a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of $r = .93$, which suggested a high level of internal reliability. Additionally, the 20-item leadership scale combined yielded a Cronbach reliability coefficient of $r = .94$. Thus, the findings indicate a positive perception of a principal’s leadership is related to satisfied teachers.

**CONSENT**

Prior to completing the survey, the participants reviewed the consent form and endorsed it with a signature that signified their agreement to participate in the study. The study only permitted involvement of volunteers who agreed to sign the informed consent form. The participants who volunteered were informed of the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality between the researcher and the participants. Nonparticipants were asked to return the survey instruments. To maintain data integrity, the surveys returned by participants were kept in a confidential file box that was opened only by the researchers and only during the data analysis phase of the study.

**ETHICAL APPROVAL**

Upon the ethical approval of the school districts and the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), teachers were asked to participate on a voluntary basis during a regularly scheduled faculty meeting.

**COMPETING INTERESTS**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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