



Fostering Teachers' Motivation through Participatory Leadership: A Study of Secondary School Practices

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Abstract

This research is to explore the impact of participatory learning on teaching motivation in secondary schools in Kotli, AJ&K. Aiming at this target, the researchers got the information from 120 secondary school teachers from both government and private schools through a questionnaire, the sampling considered being random. The researchers did a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Software (SPSS) analysis of survey data collected from teachers. This research used the descriptive statistics method. Moreover, the researchers obtained the mean and standard deviation for each item. Contrary to that, the results of this study show that the levels of participatory leadership and teacher motivation are very high, as the mean scores are always above 4.0, indicating that teachers were in strong agreement with collaborative leadership practices. The Pearson correlation revealed that participatory leadership and teacher motivation are strongly positively correlated and the connection is significant. It is, therefore, the suggestion of this paper that participatory leadership is key in the facilitation of teacher motivation as well as a conducive and collaborative school environment. The research illustrates the significance of leadership that is both autonomous and inclusive in teacher engagement and motivation in the educational institutions.

Key Words

Participatory, Leadership, Motivation, Kotli AJ&K, Secondary School

Introduction

Improving motivation in education quality is an essential element for educational institutions to develop human resources effectively. Highly qualified and competent human resources become the main players in the progress of educational systems and their competitiveness (Prasetyo et al., 2023). The notion of education quality is basically derived from the extent of the availability and usage of the crucial resources and processes in the educational system (Rasyad et al., 2019).

Among these inputs, teachers represent the most essential component, as they directly influence teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Therefore, improving teacher competence is fundamental to enhancing overall educational quality (Iqbal et al., 2025). In this context, participatory leadership and teacher motivation emerge as crucial elements, as they foster professional engagement, improve instructional practices, and contribute significantly to sustainable educational development (Nahid et al., 2023).

The participatory approach which is synonymous with democratic leadership, attempts to attract members' engagement and participation in group decision making actively (Riza et al., 2025). In schools this leadership style is meant to bring about inclusiveness by recognizing teachers, staff, students, and parents' contributions when

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setting policies and procedures of the institution. Prior studies revealed that the participatory leadership approach raised teacher commitment, trust among school leaders and staff, and school environment was enhanced through professional involvement and communication (Khofi, 2024; Khursheed et al., 2025).

Study shows that this kind of leadership not only helps student performance but also teacher satisfaction and school effectiveness (Nahid et al., 2023). However, there are issues with its usage like slow decisions, getting into fights over differing views, and work overloads that might result in teachers getting stressed (Nadeem, 2024; Iqbal et al., 2025). Even if there are advantages, male dominated structures, lack of time, and resistance to change may all be factors that prevent the use of participatory models in schools. The requirement to agree may frequently result in disservices and teachers might have difficulties in their work teaching balance.

According to the best of our knowledge, there is not much evidence about participatory leadership and teacher motivation at secondary schools in Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), Pakistan. The investigations about this issue are mainly from other regions. Schools in this area have various issues concerning resources, leadership practices, and professional development opportunities. Participatory leadership may be the answer to building teacher motivation and enhancing school quality. As a result, this study seeks to explore the participatory leadership role for the motivation of teachers at the secondary level in District Kotli. Furthermore, the study will provide some empirical insights. The insights may help school leaders, policymakers, and educational administrators in designing more participative leadership.

Research objectives

The objective of this study is:

1. To identify participatory leadership practices by secondary school teachers.
2. To measure teachers' motivation at secondary school level.
3. To assess the extent to which participatory leadership influences teachers' motivation.

Research questions

1. Which participatory leadership practices are used by secondary school teachers?
2. To what extent the teachers are motivated?
3. To what extent does participatory leadership enhance teachers' motivation in secondary schools?

Significance of the study

The study entitled the Role of Participatory Leadership in Teachers' Motivation and Performance at Secondary Level is significant because participatory leadership practices can have a great impact on teachers' motivation, performance, and ultimate effectiveness of the school. When you include teachers in decision-making, it enhances their sense of belonging and professional worth. It also positively impacts their intrinsic motivation to positively contribute. Research on Educational Leadership Highlights need of Collaboration and creates trust and shared responsibility among Educators, a prerequisite and precondition to effective education. Similarly, creating a positive work environment helps with the retention of teachers and their job satisfaction. Additionally, it helps the students, too. In the end, the results of this investigation will assist the development of more democratic and participative education institutions that allow for the development of teachers and institutional development.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are key to enhancing education quality with their motivation and a proper understanding of the profession, as well as guiding students to achieve the required goals. But teachers at the secondary school level are not very motivated. This is due to their limited involvement in decision-making, lack of recognition, and minimal professional support. As motivation decreases, so too does job satisfaction, commitment to the position,

and instructional effectiveness. Participatory leadership uses shared decision-making, collaboration, and empowering school staff to solve the school challenges to create an inclusive environment that will help all students. It is necessary to investigate the impact of participatory leadership practices on teachers' motivation at the secondary resources level and the degree to which participatory leadership practices promote a sense of ownership, engagement, and job satisfaction among teachers.

Literature Review

Participatory Leadership and Its Theoretical Link to Teacher Motivation

Participatory leadership is a democratic leadership style whose defining features are shared decision-making, collective problem solving and a greater involvement of teachers in the leadership processes of the school. Participatory leadership means involving teachers in the curriculum decision in the school's governance decision, assessment policy and planning strategy (Bogler, 2001; Bush, 2020). The people who are doing the teaching are in the best position to offer insightful material for school improvement (Muss et al., 2025). According to early leadership theorists, participatory practices help build transparency, trust, and communication between leaders and teachers. This improves the sense of ownership toward the school's goals (Lewin et al., 1939).

Prior literature showed that participatory leadership positively related with teacher motivation at secondary school (Bogler & Nir, 2012). Teachers with a voice that is valued are more motivated, dedicated and confident in their teaching (Kusumawati & Aljufri, 2025). Participatory leadership encourages continual professional learning through the sharing of instructional strategies, support from peers, and collective reflection. This further enhances teachers' internal motivation and reduces their intention to leave (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Participatory Leadership Practices, School Climate, and Secondary Teacher Motivation

Participatory leadership takes form via formal leadership practices such as teacher committees, collaborative planning teams, shared governance structures, and teacher input in decision-making regularly (Harris, 2009). The teachers are involved in school improvement, the curriculum, and instructional changes through these participatory mechanisms. Research shows that teachers have a high motive to participate in the construction of policies and procedures concerned with instruction as this strengthens their sense of professional identity and satisfaction (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Schunk et al., 2014).

The atmosphere of a school is necessary for participative leadership's effect on teachers' motivation. Trust, support from colleagues, and communication make up a positive school climate and allow participatory leadership practices to emerge (Louis et al., 2010). When teachers feel that they are safe in a psychological sense, they are more willing to share ideas, create pleasant learning and teaching conditions, and take up leadership tasks. These feelings of safety increase teachers' motivation and performance (Kusumawati & Aljufri, 2025). On the flip side, organizational structures that are steadfast and models that are hierarchical have reduced teachers' ability to be involved in processes of leadership, whereby the impact of participatory practices is low on levels of motivation (Bush & Glover, 2014). Despite its challenges, the participatory leadership style is highly motivating, especially to secondary school teachers. There are continuous innovation and collaboration which provide the diversity of needs of students in the curriculum (Harris & Jones, 2019).

Research Gap

The above-mentioned literature is a great source of information but still there remain some gaps that may be investigated. Research in the first theme has mainly consisted of conceptual discussion and broad frameworks, with only limited empirical validation across different educational contexts. The research presented in the second theme was realised amid practical applications. Still, the results often stem from isolated case studies. Also, the

findings tend to be context specific. So, the second theme suffers from inconsistent methodological approaches. This weakens the generalizability of results. There aren't many integrated studies that take on both themes to show how the theoretical constructs get operationalised in real educational settings. This fragmentation creates a gap in our understanding of how, where, and why the phenomenon works in a specific case. Significantly, there is no prior study that examines this issue in District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), creating a contextual and geographical gap in the literature. To summarize, it is evident that a thorough study is needed that connects conceptual models with empirical evidence, has a rigorous methodology, and yields context-relevant and generalizable findings.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the leadership and motivation theories which emphasize the influence of leaders' behaviours in enhancing teachers' internal motive satisfaction as well as the motivation for more intensive professional involvement. This framework combines Participatory Leadership Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to clarify the mechanism whereby involving teachers in decision making enhances teachers' motivation. Participatory leadership refers to shared authority, distributed decision making and collaboration between school leaders and teachers. When teachers are involved in leadership processes such as curriculum planning, the school improvement team, and policy decisions, it yields greater autonomy, recognition and responsibility, which are core motivators in Herzberg's model. Like SDT argues, the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and belonging promote intrinsic motivation. When teachers take part in processes, their need for belonging, esteem and cognition are satisfied by school leaders. This promotes intrinsic motivation to do their jobs, enthusiasm for the job, and commitment to the school's goals. As such, the framework assumes that participatory leadership (independent variable) fostered a positive school climate (mediating mechanism) and improved teacher motivation (dependent variable) at secondary level. The model indicates that participatory leadership has a direct influence on teacher motivation and an indirect effect through school climate and professional autonomy.

Methodology

This quantitative research design was implemented. The survey method was adopted in this study to determine the role of participative leadership on the motivation of teachers at the secondary level. The nature of the study is descriptive correlational. It aims to describe the perceptions of teachers regarding the leadership practices of their principals and their own level of motivation. Further, it aims to correlate both of these variables. The researchers opted for the online survey technique due to its efficiency and fast data collection capabilities, as well as the potential difficulty of mobilizing teachers in the geographically dispersed District Kotli, AJ&K. The target population for this study was defined as all secondary school teachers (Grades 9-12) employed in both public and private schools within District Kotli, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan. Participants were selected using random sampling technique. The final sample was $N = 120$ secondary school teachers from different schools in District Kotli.

Data was collected using a structured hard copy of a questionnaire and a Google Forms questionnaire, distributed electronically. This study collected data through a hard copy of the questionnaire and a soft copy with Google Forms. After that, this study exported the data into Microsoft Excel for cleaning and organization, then brought it into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The researchers analysed the data using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Firstly, the researchers calculated descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to examine perceptions of teachers for participatory leadership practices and their motivation. To explore the connection between participatory leadership and teacher motivation, Pearson correlation analysis was completed. This technique was appropriate because both participatory leadership practices and teacher motivation were measured on a Likert scale, producing continuous variables suitable for parametric analysis.

The mean score and standard deviation of each item of participatory leadership and teacher motivation were computed to understand the overall trends. To determine how participatory leadership practices and teacher motivation relate or link, the researchers calculated Pearson correlation coefficients. In simpler words, the researchers calculated a number that tells us if participatory leadership practices have the potential to motivate teachers or not. The findings based on the descriptive and correlational analyses were interpreted to determine the impact participatory leadership has on the motivation of teachers. This was done as it relates to the objectives of the study, with reference to the empirical evidence of the study. This analysis was performed using SPSS version 25, while correlation analyses were done considering a p-value of 0.01 significance.

Results

The study collected data from 120 secondary school teachers in District Kotli, AJ&K, including both male and female teachers from public and private schools, with varying levels of teaching experience and qualifications. The descriptive statistics are depicted in Table 1 for participatory leadership, in Table 2 for teacher motivation, and in Table 3 for correlation matrices.

Table 1
Practices of Participatory Leadership

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|---|------|------|
| Administration in school encourages teachers to share ideas | 4.2 | 0.6 |
| Teachers involved in decision-making | 4.0 | 0.7 |
| Leadership promotes teamwork | 4.1 | 0.6 |
| The head teacher values the opinions of teacher | 4.3 | 0.5 |
| Leadership practices are democratic | 4.0 | 0.7 |
| Teachers encouraged to take initiative | 4.1 | 0.6 |
| Open communication between teachers and administration | 4.1 | 0.6 |
| Teachers contribute in curriculum development | 4.0 | 0.7 |
| Administrators share decisions transparently | 4.0 | 0.6 |
| Participatory leadership improves the school environment | 4.2 | 0.5 |
| Overall Participatory Leadership | 4.1 | 0.61 |

To investigate the association at the construct level, composite indices for participatory leadership have been constructed by averaging responses across the relevant questions in Table 1.

Table 2
Teachers' Motivation

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| Motivated to carry out my teaching responsibilities successfully | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Happy with my position as a teacher | 4.0 | 0.6 |
| Obtain appreciation for my excellent work | 4.0 | 0.6 |
| Support from the leadership enhances my motivation. | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Stimulated to create fresh approaches and methods for instruction | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Feel respected and valued by the leadership of the institution | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Possess chances for training and professional development | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Belief the school management is considering my recommendations. | 4.0 | 0.6 |
| Motivation enables me to establish a good rapport with students. | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Participating in school decision-making strengthens my motivation. | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Overall Teacher Motivation | 4.07 | 0.53 |

To investigate the association at the construct level, composite indices for teacher motivation have been constructed by averaging responses across the relevant questions in Table 2.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation

| Variables | Mean | SD | R | p |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| Participatory Leadership | 4.1 | 0.61 | 0.68 | 0.001 |
| Teacher Motivation | 4.07 | 0.53 | | |

In Table 3, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the connection between these composite variables, which quantifies the degree and direction of a linear association between two continuous variables. The analysis revealed a strong positive association ($r = 0.68$, $p < .01$) between participatory leadership and teacher motivation, indicating that higher levels of participation are associated with increased teacher motivation.

Findings of the Study

Participatory Leadership Practices

Descriptive analysis indicated that teachers generally agreed that school leaders encouraged sharing ideas (Mean = 4.2), involved teachers in decision-making (Mean = 4.0), promoted teamwork (Mean = 4.1), and valued staff opinions (Mean = 4.3). The majority perceived leadership practices as democratic rather than authoritarian (Mean = 4.0) and reported that communication between teachers and administration was open and respectful (Mean = 4.1). Overall, teachers felt that participatory leadership positively impacted the school environment (Mean = 4.2).

Teachers' Motivation

Teachers were very motivated (Mean = 4.1) and satisfied with their job (Mean = 4.0). Performance recognition and leadership support received good ratings on Likert scales with means of 4.0 and 4.1 respectively. The intrinsic motivation of the respondents is shown to be enhanced by the opportunities for professional growth (Mean = 4.0) and encouragement to develop new teaching strategies (Mean = 4.1). Teachers said their motivation increased when they were involved in making decisions (Mean = 4.1) and helped build positive relationships with students (Mean = 4.1).

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between participatory leadership practices and teacher motivation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of participatory leadership were associated with greater teacher motivation, satisfaction, and engagement. These results suggest that participatory leadership significantly influences teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and sense of professional value in secondary schools of Kotli, AJ&K.

Discussions

According to the results of the study, participative leadership has a positive effect on the teacher's motivation at the level of Secondary Schools of District Kotli. Engaging teachers in decision-making, sharing ideas, and working together has been proved to strengthen the involvement of the teachers. This successful practice has been justified by Bahtilla and Hui (2021) and Nadeem (2024). Teachers who believe their input is valued are more intrinsically motivated, which is in line with Nahid et al. (2023) which states that recognition and professional support increases teacher engagement.

According to the review the study participatory leadership encourages collaborative school climate of respect and support for teachers. When leaders communicate and are transparent about their decisions, this builds trust and strengthens teacher-leader relationships. Encouraging teachers in the curriculum, planning, and decisions will make them feel empowered, responsible, and will drive their motivation and efficacy in the classroom. Nevertheless, the study provides empirical evidence that participatory leadership is a strategic approach to motivating secondary school teachers. Educational policymakers and administrative officials in Kotli, AJ&K, may utilize these insights to enhance leadership development, collaborative decision-making, and professional development programmes to improve teacher engagement and school improvement.

Conclusions

This study examined the influence of participatory leadership practices on teacher motivation in secondary schools of Kotli, AJ&K. Data were collected from 120 teachers working in both public and private secondary schools through a structured questionnaire, using a random sampling approach. The collected data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to address the study objectives. However, the findings indicate that participatory leadership significantly improves teachers' motivation at Secondary Schools of District Kotli, AJ&K. By getting teachers involved in decisions and school improvement plans, school leaders create ownership, commitment, and intrinsic motivation among teachers. The results show that team-oriented and participative leadership practices enhance the motivation of teachers as well as the performance of schools and the environment of the organization. Because there is little research in the region, it provides evidence that participatory leadership is a good strategy to improve the quality of education. A further study may look at how participatory leadership impacts teachers' performance. In future, researchers could also assess the impact of teachers' performance on students' achievements.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, it is recommended to implement a number of initiatives to enhance teacher motivation through participatory leadership in secondary schools of District Kotli, AJ&K.

1. School administrators may involve their teachers in decision-making at the school-level and include them in the decision-making process. Policies must clearly indicate that teachers may be members of committees and planning bodies.
2. The training programs shall enable school leadership to develop participatory and democratic leadership styles; positive, effective, and participative communication of leaders with fellow teacher; and helping teachers to cooperate with each other.
3. Policies must offer regular professional development and capacity-building programs for teachers to develop innovative teaching strategies and lead various initiatives in the school.
4. Make sure there are official ways to recognize and reward teachers for their input in school decisions and improvement. Recognition may have many forms including awards, certificates, or career advancement opportunities.
5. Communication channels may be open: Schools may adopt transparency communication policies so that the teacher is regularly communicated with decisions, policies and school goals. These fosters trust and reinforce teachers' sense of value.
6. Stakeholders may routinely monitor and evaluate leadership practices to make sure participatory approaches are applied properly to impacted teacher motivation and school performance.
7. Policy integration at district and provincial education levels must endorse participatory leadership. Teacher engagement must be regarded as a main driver of school improvement and quality education in participatory leadership.

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