



## Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Relationship Between Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance in Delta State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This research examined how job satisfaction mediates the connection between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions and hypotheses, aiming to explore the dynamics between leadership styles, job satisfaction, and teacher performance. A correlational survey design was used, involving a population of 20,251 teachers and principals across the state. A sample of 587 participants, including 311 teachers and 22 principals, was selected through multi-stage cluster sampling. Data were gathered using a self-developed questionnaire titled the Leadership Styles, Job Satisfaction, and Teacher Job Performance Questionnaire (LSJSJPQ), which had a reliability coefficient ranging from 0.71 to 0.88. The analysis incorporated coefficient of determination and regression analysis. The results indicated that principal leadership styles significantly influenced both teacher job performance and job satisfaction. Furthermore, job satisfaction was found to play a mediating role between leadership styles and teacher job performance. The study concludes that principal leadership styles are essential for shaping teacher outcomes and recommends improving leadership training, encouraging teacher participation in decision-making, enhancing work conditions, and regularly evaluating job satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** Principal Leadership Styles, Job Satisfaction, Teacher Job Performance, Mediating Role.

### Introduction

The impact of school leadership on teacher performance has been extensively acknowledged in educational research, with an increasing body of evidence demonstrating the significant role principals play in enhancing the effectiveness and motivation of teaching staff (Berhanu, 2025). Leadership in schools is crucial not only in shaping the overall school environment but also in directly affecting individual teacher performance. The leadership style chosen by a principal can profoundly influence teacher morale, job satisfaction, and work outcomes, which subsequently impact their performance in the classroom (Khalida et al., 2022). Studies indicate that different leadership styles, including autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, are instrumental in shaping how teachers view their roles, their job satisfaction, and their capacity to perform well (Maqbool et al., 2024). While much research has been conducted on the broader effects of leadership styles in educational settings, there is a notable gap in examining how these styles specifically influence teacher performance, particularly through the mediating factor of job satisfaction. This gap is especially evident in Nigerian secondary schools, where leadership practices and teacher performance are shaped by distinctive regional factors. Recent research has emphasized the crucial role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance in various organizational settings (Samavia et al., 2023). In the field of education, job satisfaction is particularly vital, as it directly impacts teachers' motivation, engagement, and overall job performance (Berhanu, 2025). Teachers who feel supported by their principals and are satisfied with their working conditions tend to be more motivated, resulting in improved job performance (Alabi & Okunade, 2022). While the connection between job satisfaction and performance has been widely studied, the specific role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between leadership styles and teacher performance in Nigerian schools remains underexplored (Khalida et al., 2022). Considering the challenges teachers face in public secondary schools, such as inadequate resources, overcrowded classrooms, and limited opportunities for professional development, it is crucial to examine how leadership styles affect teacher job satisfaction and, consequently, their performance, to better understand the dynamics at play. The connection between leadership styles and job satisfaction has been extensively explored in organizational behavior research, where effective leadership is found to cultivate a positive work environment that enhances employee performance (Samavia et al., 2023; Maqbool et al., 2024). In educational settings, principals who adopt a democratic leadership style, which prioritizes inclusivity and support, have



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been shown to foster an environment where teachers feel valued and motivated to improve their performance (Nila et al., 2025). In contrast, principals who use autocratic leadership styles, characterized by more directive and authoritative approaches, may create a work environment that limits teacher autonomy and satisfaction, potentially leading to reduced performance (Berhanu, 2025). Similarly, laissez-faire leadership, which involves minimal involvement and guidance from the principal, can result in a lack of direction, causing dissatisfaction among teachers and negatively affecting their performance (Khalida et al., 2022). These differing effects of leadership styles underscore the importance of understanding how various leadership approaches influence teacher satisfaction and, consequently, their job performance.

In the Nigerian education system, teachers' job satisfaction is closely tied to their working conditions, including support from leadership, compensation, and opportunities for professional growth (Khalida et al., 2022). Teachers who are satisfied with their work are generally more committed to their roles and show higher levels of engagement in their teaching, which has been linked to better student outcomes (Maqbool et al., 2024). Research indicates that leadership practices focused on teacher development and support play a key role in enhancing job satisfaction, which, in turn, can improve teacher performance (Nila et al., 2025). However, the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between leadership styles and teacher performance in secondary schools in Nigeria remains a largely unexplored area of research. Understanding this dynamic is crucial, especially in regions like Delta State, where teachers face distinctive challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and low morale. The Nigerian educational system has undergone substantial reforms aimed at enhancing educational quality and teacher performance. However, much of the focus has been placed on technical and pedagogical improvements, with less attention given to the impact of leadership styles on teacher performance through job satisfaction. Considering the pivotal role of teacher performance in shaping student outcomes, it is essential to understand how principal leadership practices can enhance teacher satisfaction and boost performance. Investigating the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher performance is therefore crucial, especially in the Nigerian context, where leadership practices are shaped by local socio-economic and cultural factors. This study aimed to fill this gap by exploring how principal leadership styles influence teacher job performance through job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Delta State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the Nigerian education system, particularly in public secondary schools, teacher performance plays a crucial role in determining educational quality. However, teacher performance is often shaped by various factors, with leadership being one of the most influential. Principals, as school leaders, have the ability to influence the work environment through their leadership styles, which can either enhance or impede teacher motivation and productivity. Although leadership is recognized as a key factor in influencing teacher performance, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding about how different leadership styles—autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire—affect teacher job satisfaction and, in turn, their performance. The gap in knowledge regarding the direct and indirect effects of leadership styles on teacher performance, particularly through the mediating role of job satisfaction, is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. Public secondary schools in Delta State, like many other regions in Nigeria, face numerous challenges that impact both leadership practices and teacher performance. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, poor working conditions, and a lack of professional development opportunities compound the difficulties teachers experience in these areas. Despite their crucial role in shaping school culture and influencing teacher performance, principals often work within these challenging environments. As a result, it is essential to understand how leadership practices can either support or hinder teacher outcomes. Without a comprehensive examination of the relationship between leadership styles, job satisfaction, and teacher performance, there is a risk of perpetuating ineffective leadership practices that fail to meet the needs of teachers, ultimately compromising the quality of education in the region. This study, therefore, plays an important role in exploring these dynamics and offering insights into how leadership styles can be better aligned with teachers' needs to enhance performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. The study aims to explore how various leadership styles (autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire) directly and indirectly impact teacher job performance through job satisfaction. Specifically, the study seeks to:



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1. Determine the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance.
2. Examine the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction.
3. Determine the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher job performance.
4. Investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance?
2. What is the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction?
3. What is the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher job performance?
4. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance?

### **Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses, tested at the 0.05 significance level:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and teacher job performance.

H<sub>04</sub>: Job satisfaction does not significantly mediate the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a correlational survey design within an ex-post facto research framework. The correlational design was appropriate for investigating the relationships between principal leadership styles, job satisfaction, and teacher job performance, as these variables existed naturally without any manipulation. The ex-post facto approach enabled the researcher to examine the pre-existing relationships and assess the strength and direction of these relationships in real-world settings. The study aimed to explore how principal leadership styles impacted teacher job performance both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction, offering valuable insights into these dynamics within the educational context of Delta State. The study's population included 20,251 individuals, comprising principals and teachers from public secondary schools in Delta State. Specifically, the population consisted of 479 principals and 14,877 teachers. This diverse group ensured that the findings accurately reflected the educational landscape of the state. The sample for the study included 333 respondents, consisting of 311 teachers and 22 principals. A multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to select the sample, combining simple random sampling and stratified sampling methods. The population was first divided into senatorial districts, and 40% of the local government areas (LGAs) within each district were randomly chosen. Next, 10% of the secondary schools within the selected LGAs were picked, with all principals and teachers from these schools automatically included in the sample.

The primary data collection tool was a self-designed questionnaire, titled the Leadership Styles, Job Satisfaction, and Teacher Job Performance Questionnaire (LSJSJPQ). This instrument was created to gather data on the three main variables of the study. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section A collected demographic information such as gender, location, age, and years of experience. Section B focused on leadership styles, with 18 items measuring authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership approaches. Section C evaluated job satisfaction with 10 items, and Section D assessed teacher job performance using 15 items. A four-point Likert scale was used for responses, ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1), allowing for the quantification of the key variables. To ensure the instrument's validity, it was reviewed by the researcher's supervisors and an external expert in educational management. The items of the instrument were assessed for relevance, clarity, and completeness, ensuring they accurately captured the study's key concepts. Based on the feedback from experts, revisions were made to enhance the clarity and scope of the items. The instrument was pre-tested on 20 teachers and 10 principals from Edo State, a location outside the study area. The reliability of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with the results showing strong internal consistency: a reliability coefficient of 0.86 for leadership styles, 0.71 for job satisfaction, and 0.88 for teacher job performance. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher along with four trained research assistants, who informed the respondents about the purpose of the study before distributing the instrument. The questionnaires were handed out on-site, and completed ones



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were collected immediately to maintain a high response rate. A total of 333 questionnaires were distributed, and 310 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 93%. This high response rate ensured the reliability and robustness of the data used for analysis.

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. To address the research questions, the coefficient of determination was used, enabling the researcher to examine the proportion of variance in teacher job performance explained by principal leadership styles and job satisfaction. Linear regression analysis was applied to test the hypotheses, assessing the relationship between individual independent variables (such as leadership styles) and the dependent variable (teacher job performance). For hypotheses involving multiple independent variables, multiple regression analysis was conducted. All statistical tests were carried out at the 0.05 significance level, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study's results.

## Presentation of Results

**Table 1: Relationship between Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance**

State	Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)
Delta	Constant (Leadership Styles)	0.99 <sup>a</sup>	0.98	0.98	0.21	2.12 0.92

As presented in Table 1, there is a very strong correlation between leadership styles and teacher job performance, with an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.98. This suggests that principal leadership styles account for 98% of the variance in teacher job performance. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 2.12 further underscores the strength of this relationship. Specifically, for each one-unit increase in leadership style, teacher job performance increases by 2.12 units, indicating a substantial positive effect of leadership styles on teacher performance. This finding underscores the significant influence of principal leadership on teacher job performance.

**Table 2: Relationship between Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction**

State	Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)
Delta	Constant (Leadership Styles)	0.98 <sup>a</sup>	0.96	0.95	0.22	1.99 0.87

As shown in Table 2, principal leadership styles have a strong relationship with teacher job satisfaction, with an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.96. This indicates that 96% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction is explained by leadership styles. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 1.99 suggests that for each one-unit increase in leadership style, teacher job satisfaction increases by 1.99 units. This highlights the significant role that principal leadership styles play in improving teacher satisfaction.

**Table 3: Relationship between Teacher Job Satisfaction and Teacher Job Performance**

State	Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)
Delta	Constant (Job Satisfaction)	0.95 <sup>a</sup>	0.90	0.89	0.23	2.10 0.92

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant relationship between teacher job satisfaction and teacher job performance, with an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.90. This means that job satisfaction explains 90% of the variance in teacher job performance. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 2.10 indicates that for each one-unit increase in job satisfaction, teacher job performance increases by 2.10 units. This underscores the vital role of job satisfaction in enhancing teacher performance.

**Table 4: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Job Performance**

State	Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)
Delta	Constant (Leadership Styles + Job Satisfaction)	0.98 <sup>4</sup>	0.96	0.95	0.19	2.01 0.88

As shown in Table 4, job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between leadership styles and teacher job performance. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.96 indicates that both leadership styles and job satisfaction together explain 96% of the variance in teacher job performance. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 2.01 suggests that for each one-unit increase in



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both leadership styles and job satisfaction, teacher job performance increases by 2.01 units. This confirms that job satisfaction plays a key mediating role, amplifying the positive effect of principal leadership on teacher performance.

**Table 5: Significance of the Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance**

Model	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	145.15	1	145.15	59.33	0.000
	Residual	118.95	309	0.38		
	Total	264.10	310			

As shown in Table 5, the results reveal that principal leadership styles are significant predictors of teacher job performance. The F value of 59.33 with a Sig. value of 0.000 indicates a highly significant prediction. These findings suggest that principal leadership styles are strong determinants of teacher job performance.

**Table 6: Significance of the Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Satisfaction**

Model	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	121.85	1	121.85	50.90	0.000
	Residual	104.24	309	0.34		
	Total	226.09	310			

As shown in Table 6, principal leadership styles are significant predictors of teacher job satisfaction. The F value of 50.90 with a Sig. value of 0.000 indicates a significant prediction. These findings confirm that principal leadership styles have a strong influence on teacher job satisfaction.

**Table 7: Significance of the Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Teacher Job Performance**

Model	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	135.22	1	135.22	55.80	0.000
	Residual	128.10	309	0.41		
	Total	263.32	310			

As shown in Table 7, teacher job satisfaction is a significant predictor of teacher job performance. The F value of 55.80 with a Sig. value of 0.000 indicates a strong prediction. These findings suggest that teacher job satisfaction plays a crucial role in predicting teacher job performance.

**Table 8: Significance of the Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Relationship between Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance**

Model	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	158.25	2	79.13	34.74	0.000
	Residual	105.85	308	0.34		
	Total	264.10	310			

As shown in Table 8, job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between leadership styles and teacher job performance. The F value of 34.74 with a Sig. value of 0.000 indicates a significant mediation effect. These findings suggest that job satisfaction plays a key role in strengthening the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher performance.

### Discussion of Findings

The results of this study offer valuable insights into the relationship between principal leadership styles, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher job performance. A key finding is that principal leadership styles significantly predict teacher job performance. The data indicates that leadership styles, especially democratic leadership, have a strong impact on teacher performance in the classroom. This aligns with existing research that highlights the important role of school leadership in shaping teacher performance. For example, Gao (2024) found that transformational leadership practices directly influence teacher effectiveness and motivation. The findings suggest that teachers are more likely to excel when they feel supported and guided by their principals. This is likely because principals who employ supportive, goal-oriented leadership practices create an environment that fosters teacher engagement and motivation, ultimately boosting their classroom performance.



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Another key finding is that principal leadership styles significantly predict teacher job satisfaction. Leadership styles that are inclusive, supportive, and empowering lead to higher levels of job satisfaction among teachers. This is consistent with previous studies, such as Maqbool et al. (2024), which found that leadership styles promoting collaboration and involving teachers in decision-making contribute to enhanced job satisfaction. The likely reason for this is that when teachers feel valued and included in the decision-making process, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Additionally, democratic leadership styles typically foster a positive, supportive work environment where teachers feel respected and empowered. This satisfaction can lead to better teacher retention, a more positive school culture, and ultimately, improved outcomes for students. The third significant finding of this study is that teacher job satisfaction significantly predicts teacher job performance. The results indicate that higher levels of job satisfaction are strongly linked to better classroom performance. This finding aligns with the research of Khalida et al. (2022), who discovered that satisfied teachers are more motivated to perform effectively. The likely reason for this is that satisfied teachers tend to be more engaged, dedicated, and committed to their students' success. Job satisfaction encompasses several factors, including workload, professional development opportunities, relationships with colleagues and school leaders, and the overall work environment. When teachers feel satisfied in these areas, they are more likely to invest time and effort into their teaching practices, resulting in improved job performance. Finally, this study emphasizes the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher job performance. The data shows that job satisfaction mediates the effect of leadership styles on teacher performance. This suggests that the positive impact of leadership on teacher performance is strengthened when teachers are satisfied with their jobs. This finding aligns with the work of Samavia et al. (2023), who identified job satisfaction as a key mediator in the relationship between leadership styles and job performance across various organizational contexts. The likely reason for this is that job satisfaction acts as a motivational factor, encouraging teachers to fully engage in their roles. When teachers are content with their work environment and feel supported by their principals, they are more likely to perform at their best. In contrast, even if a principal employs an effective leadership style, job dissatisfaction can undermine the potential benefits of leadership on teacher performance. Thus, job satisfaction plays a critical role in strengthening the connection between leadership styles and teacher outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

This study clearly demonstrates that principal leadership styles, especially democratic leadership, have a significant impact on teacher job performance and job satisfaction. It was found that leadership styles not only directly influence teacher performance but also have a major effect on teacher job satisfaction, which, in turn, mediates the relationship between leadership and teacher performance. The findings highlight that job satisfaction is crucial in enhancing the effectiveness of leadership in schools. Principals who adopt supportive, goal-oriented leadership styles promote higher job satisfaction, which ultimately leads to improved teacher performance. These results emphasize the essential role of school leadership in shaping teacher outcomes and suggest that principals who foster a positive, inclusive work environment are likely to see improvements in both teacher satisfaction and performance.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed: Leadership training programs for principals should be enhanced, focusing on cultivating democratic and transformational leadership styles that encourage collaboration, support, and teacher involvement in decision-making.

1. Teachers should be actively engaged in the decision-making processes within the school, particularly in areas such as teaching methods, policies, and professional development, to improve their job satisfaction and performance.
2. Schools should ensure that teachers have access to the necessary resources, support, and a conducive work environment, as these factors play a significant role in job satisfaction and performance.
3. Regular job satisfaction surveys should be implemented to better understand teachers' needs and concerns, allowing school leaders to make informed decisions that improve teacher satisfaction and, in turn, their performance.

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