

## Investigating the Relationship Between Leadership Practices and ESL Teacher Job Satisfaction

1. Ikramullah M. Phil Scholar, Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad  
Email: ikonsoft057@gmail (Corresponding Author)
2. Zaristan Khan M.A TEFL Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad  
Email: [zaristankhan73@gmail.com](mailto:zaristankhan73@gmail.com)
3. Shumaila Ashraf, Senior Lecturer, Lahore Garrison University

### Abstract

This study investigates the intricate relationship between leadership practices and job satisfaction among English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in higher educational institutions in, Pakistan. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with 16 ESL teachers, the thematic analysis explores the nuanced dynamics of supportive leadership, the catalytic role of tailored professional development, and the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction. The findings underscore the significance of cultivating a supportive leadership culture and investing in targeted professional development initiatives to enhance the overall well-being and effectiveness of ESL educators. The study contributes valuable insights to the discourse on educational leadership, offering practical recommendations for institutions seeking to create environments conducive to ESL teacher satisfaction in diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** ESL teachers, job satisfaction, leadership practices, professional development, higher education, educational leadership, cultural competence.

### Introduction

Teacher satisfaction, a multifaceted construct, encompasses the overall contentment, fulfillment, and positive emotional state experienced by educators in their professional roles (Li & Yu, 2022). It goes beyond the confines of mere job happiness, extending its purview to encapsulate various interconnected factors, including the work environment, professional development opportunities, and the level of support received from the educational institution (Toropova et al., 2021). The holistic nature of teacher satisfaction is pivotal for fostering a healthy and conducive educational environment, as it directly influences the well-being and professional engagement of educators.

The significance of teacher satisfaction becomes even more pronounced when viewed as a linchpin for positive educational outcomes. Satisfied teachers are not only more likely to be engaged but also exhibit higher levels of motivation and dedication to their students and the overall mission of the educational institution (Wolomasi et al., 2019). This dedication, in turn, contributes to the enhancement of teaching quality, facilitating an environment conducive to increased student achievement. Moreover, the ripple effect of teacher satisfaction extends to the cultivation of a positive school culture, influencing the overall ethos of the academic institution (Kasalak & Dagyar, 2020). Therefore, understanding and fostering teacher satisfaction emerges as essential components for the holistic development and success of educational ecosystems.

For ESL teachers, job satisfaction holds a distinctive significance due to the unique challenges they face. As educators working with students acquiring English as a second language, their job satisfaction directly influences the effectiveness of language acquisition, cultural integration, and overall academic success for a diverse student population (Erarslan, 2021; Isik, 2021). Understanding and addressing the specific factors influencing ESL teacher job satisfaction becomes imperative in promoting both teacher well-being and student outcomes in multicultural educational settings.

Various factors contribute to teacher satisfaction, including but not limited to supportive leadership, professional development opportunities, work-life balance, and a positive school culture (Baluyos et al., 2019; Dicke et al., 2020). The interplay of these elements shapes the overall job satisfaction experienced by educators. In the realm of ESL teaching, the significance of job satisfaction intensifies. Factors like cultural competence, effective communication, and tailored professional development become critical in addressing the diverse needs of ESL students (Dincer, 2019). The impact of these factors on ESL teacher job satisfaction ripples through the classroom, influencing the language acquisition and cultural integration of their students.

Leadership practices, in particular, play a pivotal role in shaping ESL teacher job satisfaction (Zhang & Yuan, 2020). Supportive leadership that recognizes and addresses the unique challenges faced by ESL educators fosters an environment conducive to professional growth and well-being (Rezaee et al., 2020; Akram et al., 2022). Effective leaders in ESL settings understand the cultural nuances, provide targeted professional development, and establish a collaborative atmosphere, all of which significantly contribute to the overall satisfaction of ESL teachers (Ostad et al., 2019). This study seeks to unravel the intricacies of this leadership-ESL teacher satisfaction dynamic, shedding light on how leadership practices impact the professional contentment of educators in the ESL context.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do leadership practices within higher educational institutions specifically tailored for ESL contexts influence the job satisfaction of ESL teachers?
2. What role do professional development opportunities, with a focus on cultural competence and effective communication strategies, play in enhancing job satisfaction among ESL teachers in higher educational institutions?

### **Literature Review**

The exploration of the relationship between leadership practices and job satisfaction among ESL teachers within higher educational institutions is situated within a broader context of educational research. Previous studies have delved into the intricate dynamics of teacher satisfaction and the multifaceted factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

Research by Cansoy (2019) emphasized the pivotal role of leadership in shaping the professional contentment of teachers. Their findings highlighted that supportive leadership practices were positively correlated with increased job satisfaction, fostering a positive work environment and contributing to overall teacher well-being. Expanding our understanding, the study by Dou et al. (2017) brought attention to the importance of professional development opportunities in enhancing job satisfaction among teachers. Their research emphasized the positive correlation between access to continuous learning experiences and overall teacher well-being. However, the specific implications of professional development, particularly tailored to address the unique demands of ESL education in higher institutions, remain a less-explored aspect in existing literature.

In the realm of ESL education, Arumugam et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive study focusing on the unique challenges faced by ESL teachers in higher education. The research underscored the significance of cultural competence and effective communication skills in addressing the diverse needs of ESL students. However, the study also hinted at a gap in understanding how leadership practices specifically tailored for ESL contexts might influence

teacher satisfaction. Abdelrady and Akram (2022) also highlighted the need of management support in EFL teaching modifications and innovations.

Building upon this foundation, Lorenz (2023) delved into the specific leadership practices that impact ESL teacher job satisfaction in secondary education. Their research identified the importance of leaders recognizing and addressing the cultural nuances inherent in ESL instruction, suggesting a need for targeted leadership strategies in ESL settings. Khan et al.(2017) have expressed that print media acts as a tool in the hands of capitalists. Bhutto and Ramzan (2021) have claimed that there is a collusive stance and pacifier agenda of media wrapped in the strategy of power. Ramzan and Khan (2019) have suggested that stereotyped ideological constructions are enhanced by nawabs in Baluchistan. Ramzan (2021) have claimed that there is a collusive stance and pacifier agenda of media wrapped in the strategy of power. Nawaz et al.(2021) have said that power is striving for negative them and positive us. Ramzan et al. (2023) have confirmed that the priority of students is determined by their motivation. Ramzan et al. (2023) have further claimed that research has implications for ESL teachers in designing effective language instruction that can help students improve their writing skills and avoid common subject-verb agreement errors. Bhutto and Nawaz et al.(2021) have said that power is striving for negative them and positive us. Learning attitude makes learning more enjoyable and collaborative strategies plays role (Ramzan et al., 2023). Further, Ramzan et al.(2021) have indicated that there is a manipulation and exploitation of the public in the hands of politicians and powerful people.

Despite these valuable insights, the literature still lacks a comprehensive examination of the nuanced relationship between leadership practices and job satisfaction among ESL teachers within higher educational institutions. This study aims to address this gap by scrutinizing the specific leadership dynamics that contribute to or hinder the job satisfaction of ESL educators in the complex landscape of higher education. Through an amalgamation of previous research findings, this literature review sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the leadership-ESL teacher satisfaction dynamic.

## **Methodology**

The study used qualitative technique and by involving a purposive sample of 16 ESL teachers from various universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Participants were selected based on their experience in teaching ESL courses and their willingness to engage in in-depth interviews. The sample aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences within the higher education ESL context. Participants were contacted through official university channels, and informed consent was obtained prior to their involvement in the study. The selection criteria included a minimum of three years of ESL teaching experience and representation from different academic disciplines within the university setting.

## **Data Collection**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary method of data collection. The interviews were designed to explore participants' perceptions of leadership practices, professional development opportunities, and their impact on job satisfaction. Open-ended questions allowed participants to share their experiences and insights freely.

The interview protocol was developed based on the research questions and a thorough review of relevant literature. Questions focused on participants' experiences with leadership, perceptions of professional development, and the influence of these factors on their job

satisfaction. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into specific aspects of their responses (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns, themes, and recurring concepts within the interview data. The analysis followed a systematic process, including data familiarization, code generation, theme development, and validation. Rigor was maintained through the use of multiple coders and regular peer debriefing sessions.

### **Results**

The thematic analysis of the interviews with 16 ESL teachers revealed nuanced insights into the relationship between leadership practices and job satisfaction in the context of higher education in Lahore, Pakistan.

#### **1. Leadership Practices**

Participants consistently highlighted the significance of leadership practices in shaping their professional experiences. Supportive leadership, characterized by clear communication, understanding of cultural nuances, and proactive problem-solving, emerged as a key determinant of job satisfaction among ESL teachers. Conversely, instances of unsupportive leadership were associated with increased dissatisfaction, particularly in navigating the unique challenges of ESL instruction. Few teachers stated:

*Teacher A:* "Having a department head who understands the challenges of ESL teaching makes a huge difference. Clear communication and a willingness to address our concerns directly contribute to a positive work environment."

*Teacher B:* "There were times when leadership seemed distant and unaware of the specific needs we face. It's frustrating when you don't feel supported in navigating the complexities of ESL instruction."

#### **2. Professional Development**

The role of professional development in influencing job satisfaction was a recurring theme. ESL teachers expressed a strong desire for targeted development opportunities focusing on cultural competence, effective pedagogical strategies for diverse learners, and technology integration. Participants who reported access to relevant professional development exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning in the dynamic field of ESL education. Few teachers specified:

*Teacher B:* "I feel most satisfied when I can attend workshops focusing on integrating technology into ESL lessons. It not only enhances my teaching but also keeps me motivated and engaged in professional growth."

*Teacher C:* "There's a hunger for learning among ESL teachers, but sometimes the offered professional development lacks relevance to our specific challenges. Tailored sessions would make a significant difference."

#### **3. Job Satisfaction**

Overall, ESL teachers described job satisfaction as a multifaceted construct influenced by leadership practices, professional development, and a supportive work environment. The integration of these factors played a pivotal role in enhancing the teachers' sense of accomplishment, motivation, and commitment to their roles. Few teachers expressed:



*Teacher E:* "When leadership values our contributions and provides the necessary support, it translates into job satisfaction. Feeling acknowledged and appreciated goes a long way in fostering a positive teaching experience."

*Teacher D:* "I've seen a direct correlation between a supportive work environment and my overall satisfaction. It's not just about the tasks; it's about feeling valued as an ESL educator."

#### **4. Challenges**

While positive correlations were identified, challenges were also acknowledged. Some participants noted a lack of consistency in leadership support and limited access to tailored professional development opportunities. These challenges were associated with varying degrees of job dissatisfaction among ESL teachers. Few teachers specified:

*Teacher A:* "It's disheartening when leadership support is inconsistent. You can be on track with your goals, and then suddenly face a lack of understanding from above. It creates unnecessary stress and dissatisfaction."

*Teacher C:* "Access to relevant professional development is sometimes a challenge. We need more opportunities tailored to the unique needs of ESL teachers. It's hard to stay motivated without continuous learning."

#### **5. Recommendations**

Based on the findings, recommendations include fostering a culture of supportive leadership, providing targeted professional development initiatives, and addressing the unique needs of ESL teachers in higher educational institutions. Strategies to enhance leadership practices and expand professional development opportunities emerged as crucial avenues for promoting ESL teacher job satisfaction. In this regard Few teachers recommended:

*Teacher B:* "Our leaders could benefit from understanding the specific struggles we face. More frequent check-ins and open dialogue would create a supportive leadership culture."

*Teacher E:* "I'd love to see a more intentional effort in providing ongoing professional development. Workshops that directly address the nuances of ESL teaching would significantly contribute to job satisfaction."

#### **Discussion**

The findings of this study shed light on the intricate dynamics between leadership practices and ESL teacher job satisfaction in higher educational institutions in Lahore. The rich dialogues and thematic analysis offer valuable insights into the nuances of this relationship, providing a foundation for meaningful discussions and implications.

The consensus among ESL teachers on the significance of supportive leadership aligns with existing literature (Ostad et al., 2019; Skopak & Hadzaihmetovic, 2022). Clear communication, understanding of cultural nuances, and proactive problem-solving emerged as crucial components. The positive experiences shared by teachers emphasize the impact that leadership practices can have on creating a conducive work environment, fostering job satisfaction, and, subsequently, enhancing the overall teaching and learning experience.

In addition, the role of professional development in influencing ESL teacher job satisfaction echoes findings from broader educational contexts (Safari et al., 2020). The hunger for tailored learning experiences, focusing on cultural competence and effective pedagogy for diverse learners, highlights a need for institutions to invest in continuous development opportunities. Aligning professional development with the specific challenges faced by ESL

teachers emerges as a key strategy to not only promote job satisfaction but also contribute to the professional growth and effectiveness of educators (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023).

The multifaceted nature of job satisfaction, as evidenced by the dialogues, underscores the interconnectedness of leadership practices, professional development, and a supportive work environment. Teachers described a sense of accomplishment, motivation, and commitment when these elements were integrated. This holistic view of job satisfaction emphasizes the need for educational leaders to consider a comprehensive approach that addresses the various dimensions impacting ESL educators (Daramola, 2023).

Regarding the identified challenges, including inconsistent leadership support and limited access to relevant professional development, provide valuable areas for intervention. Institutions can benefit from fostering a culture of consistent leadership engagement and investing in targeted professional development initiatives. Addressing these challenges is not only instrumental in enhancing job satisfaction but also pivotal in retaining skilled ESL educators.

The findings offer clear recommendations for educational leaders. Intentional efforts to understand the unique struggles of ESL teachers, frequent check-ins, and open dialogue can contribute to a supportive leadership culture. Additionally, the call for more intentional and relevant professional development opportunities emphasizes the need for educational leaders to align resources with the specific needs of ESL educators, ultimately influencing job satisfaction positively.

### **Conclusions**

In concluding this study, the exploration of the relationship between leadership practices and ESL teacher job satisfaction in higher educational institutions in Lahore, Pakistan has illuminated crucial insights. The significance of supportive leadership, the catalytic role of tailored professional development, and the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction have emerged as central themes. The dialogues among ESL teachers provided nuanced perspectives, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these elements in shaping a positive teaching environment. The findings underscore the importance of cultivating a supportive leadership culture and investing in targeted professional development initiatives to enhance the overall job satisfaction of ESL educators. These insights contribute not only to the academic discourse on educational leadership but also offer practical recommendations for institutions seeking to create environments that foster the well-being and effectiveness of ESL teachers in diverse educational settings.

### **Limitations**

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The small sample size and the focus on a specific geographic location (Lahore, Pakistan) may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. While the thematic analysis provided rich insights, the study's qualitative nature may benefit from complementing future research with quantitative methods for a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, the cross-sectional design presents a snapshot of the participants' experiences, and longitudinal studies could offer insights into the evolving dynamics between leadership practices and ESL teacher job satisfaction over time. Despite these limitations, the study serves as a valuable contribution to the literature, opening avenues for further exploration and refinement of strategies to support ESL educators in higher educational institutions.

## References

- Abdelrady, A. H., & Akram, H. (2022). An empirical study of ClassPoint tool application in enhancing EFL students' online learning satisfaction. *Systems, 10*(5), 154.
- Akram, H., & Abdelrady, A. H. (2023). Application of ClassPoint tool in reducing EFL learners' test anxiety: an empirical evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 1-19.
- Akram, H., Raza, M., Jan, M. F., Aslam, S., & Nivin-Vargas, L. (2022). Identified leadership practices and teachers' professional development in Karachi, Pakistan: the moderation effect of training. *Education 3-13*, 1-18.
- Arumugam, N., De Mello, G., Ramalingam, S., bin Ibrahim, M. N. A., Suppiah, P. C., & Krishnan, I. A. (2021). COVID-19: Challenges of online teaching among ESL educators of private higher learning institutions in Malaysia. *English as a Foreign Language International Journal, 1*(2), 141-158.
- Baluyos, G. R., Rivera, H. L., & Baluyos, E. L. (2019). Teachers' job satisfaction and work performance. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 7*(8), 206-221.
- Bhutto, J., and Ramzan. M. (2021). "ENGLISH: Verses of Quran, Gender Issues, Feminine Injustice, and Media Transmission - CDA of Pakistani Press Reports. *Rahatulquloob 5* (2), 111-26. <https://doi.org/10.51411/rahat.5.2.2021/316>
- Cansoy, R. (2019). The Relationship between School Principals' Leadership Behaviours and Teachers' Job Satisfaction: A Systematic Review. *International Education Studies, 12*(1), 37-52.
- Daramola, C. A. (2023). English Language Teachers' Job Satisfaction and Commitment to Teaching in Selected Secondary Schools in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. *AFRICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, 25*.
- Dicke, T., Marsh, H. W., Parker, P. D., Guo, J., Riley, P., & Waldeyer, J. (2020). Job satisfaction of teachers and their principals in relation to climate and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 112*(5), 1061.
- Dincer, A. (2019). Language teacher autonomy in Turkish EFL context: Relations with teachers' autonomy and job satisfaction levels. *Journal on English Language Teaching, 9*(2).
- Dou, D., Devos, G., & Valcke, M. (2017). The relationships between school autonomy gap, principal leadership, teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 45*(6), 959-977.
- Erarslan, A. (2021). The role of job satisfaction in predicting teacher emotions: A study on English language teachers. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research, 8*(2), 192-205.
- Isik, A. (2021). Factors Affecting the Organisational Citizenship Behaviour of English Language Teachers. *English Teaching, 76*(1), 125-151.
- Kasalak, G., & Dagyar, M. (2020). The relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher job satisfaction: A meta-analysis of the teaching and learning international survey (TALIS). *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 20*(3), 16-33.
- Khan, M.A., Ramzan, M.M., Dar, S R.(2017) Deconstruction of Ideological Discursivity in Pakistani Print Media Advertisements from CDA Perspective Erevna: The Journal of Linguistics and Literature,1(1),56-79.
- Li, M., & Yu, Z. (2022). Teachers' satisfaction, role, and digital literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability, 14*(3), 1121.
- Lorenz, K. R. (2023). *An Analysis of the Effects of Administrator Support on Retention and Job Satisfaction Among Early-Career ESOL Teachers* (Doctoral dissertation, Notre Dame of Maryland University).
- Nawaz, S., Aqeel, M., Ramzan, M., Rehman, M., Tanoli, Z.A., (2021). Language Representation and Ideological Stance of Brahui in Comparison with Urdu and English Newspapers Headlines, *Harf-O-Sukhan, 5*(4), 267-293.

- Magaldi, D., & Berler, M. (2020). Semi-structured interviews. *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*, 4825-4830.
- Ostad, S. A., Ghanizadeh, A., & Ghanizadeh, M. (2019). The dynamism of EFL teachers' professional identity with respect to their teaching commitment and job satisfaction. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1685353.
- Rezaee, A., Khoshsima, H., Zare-Behtash, E., & Sarani, A. (2020). English teachers' job satisfaction: Assessing contributions of the Iranian school organizational climate in a mixed methods study. *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 1613007.
- Ramzan, M., Khan, M.A., (2019).CDA of Balochistan Newspapers Headlines- A Study of Nawabs' Stereotyped Ideological Constructions. Annual Research Journal 'Hankén', XI, 27-41.
- Ramzan, M. Qureshi, A.B., Samad, A. Sultan, N. (2021) Politics as Rhetoric: A Discourse Analysis of Selected Pakistani Politicians Press Statements. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 9(3) ,1063-1070
- Ramzan, M., Oteir, I., Khan, M. A., Al-Otaibi, A., & Malik, S. (2023). English learning motivation of ESL learners from ethnic, gender, and cultural perspectives in sustainable development goals. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 12(3), 195-212.
- Ramzan, M., Azmat, Z., Khan,, M.A., & Nisa, Z. un. (2023). Subject-Verb Agreement Errors in ESL Students' Academic Writing: A Surface Taxonomy Approach. *Linguistic Forum - A Journal of Linguistics*, 5(2), 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.53057/linfo/2023.5.2.3>
- Ramzan, M., Bibi, R., & Khunsa, N. (2023). Unraveling the Link between Social Media Usage and Academic Achievement among ESL Learners: A Quantitative Analysis. *Global. Educational Studies Review*, VIII(II), 407-421. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2023\(VIII-II\).37](https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2023(VIII-II).37)
- Ramzan et al. (2021) POLITICS AS RHETORIC: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTEDPAKISTANI POLITICIANS' PRESS STATEMENTS, *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*Vol 9, No 3, 2021, pp 1063-1070.
- Ramzan, M. Mushtaq, A. & Ashraf, Z. (2023) Evacuation of Difficulties and Challenges for Academic Writing in ESL Learning. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics & Literature* VOL. 7 ISSUE I (2023), 42-49.
- Safari, I., Davaribina, M., & Khoshnevis, I. (2020). The Influence of EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction and Reflective Thinking on Their Professional Development: A Structural Equation Modeling. *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 13(1), 27-40.
- Skopak, A., & Hadzaihmetovic, N. (2022). The impact of transformational and transactional leadership style on employee job satisfaction. *International Journal of Business and Administrative Studies*, 8(3), 113.
- Toropova, A., Myrberg, E., & Johansson, S. (2021). Teacher job satisfaction: the importance of school working conditions and teacher characteristics. *Educational review*, 73(1), 71-97.
- Wolomasi, A. K., Asaloei, S. I., & Werang, B. R. (2019). Job Satisfaction and Performance of Elementary School Teachers. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 8(4), 575-580.
- Zhang, J., & Yuan, R. (2020). How can professional learning communities influence teachers' job satisfaction? A mixed-method study in China. *Teachers and Teaching*, 26(3-4), 229-247.