

Teachers' Perspectives of the Manifestation of Teacher Leadership in Islamic Schools

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Through a quantitative approach, this study implemented Angelle and DeHart's Teacher Leadership Inventory (TLI) analysis (2011) with the aims of exploring the nature of teacher leadership in International Islamic schools and understanding the variables that affect teacher leadership from teachers' perspectives. A one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent and unrelated groups, and it was conducted for each variable (i.e., school level, degree level, gender, years of experience, and status for leadership position) and the four factors of the TLI. The findings revealed that gender, leadership position, and nationality affected the teachers' perspectives regarding teacher leadership in Islamic schools. We argue that these differences should be taken into consideration by Islamic school leadership and policy makers when establishing schools and building systems, thereby avoiding assumptions that teacher leadership is embedded within their systems in all countries (Muslim and non-Muslim).

Keywords: teacher leadership; Islamic schools; teacher leadership inventory; gender; Islamic schools

Introduction

“Teacher leadership” is an umbrella term that covers both formal and informal leadership roles, including, for example, the roles of subject coordinator, professional development coordinator, and volunteer who leads activities and engages parents (Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). York-Barr and Duke (2004) have defined teacher leadership as a “process where teachers individually or collectively influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to develop teaching and learning practices by aiming to increase students' achievement” (p. 288).

Teacher leadership practices include the development of learning opportunities for everyone at the school (Hunzicker, 2017), improvements in the working environment (Carver, 2016), the acceptance of tasks beyond the required duties, volunteering to serve and support others (Angelle & DeHart, 2011), and the engagement of parents and stakeholders (Poekert et al., 2016). Researchers believe that such practices are inspired by educators' personal faith and other characteristics, such as flexibility and the passion to make a difference (Carver, 2016). Teachers practise leadership in many ways, both inside and outside the schools (Grant, 2005; Sawalhi, 2019), and their contributions vary according to their skills, knowledge, and school requirements. However, few studies have explored the relationship between teacher leadership and religious beliefs (Sawalhi, 2023).

While teacher leadership is receiving increasing attention in many countries due to the striking development of educational systems and the complexity of leading schools and educational organisations (Schott et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), there is a lack of

research on teacher leadership practices in the context of Arab and Muslim countries (Hallinger & Hammad, 2019; Hammad & Shah, 2019). Moreover, researchers have highlighted the confusion in understanding educational leadership in Arab and Muslim contexts affects teachers' practices. For example, Sellami et al. contend that "those who assess teachers may base their assessment on Tarbiyyah while the teacher could be working within a paradigm informed by Ta'leem" (2019, p. 16). Tarbiyyah is an Arabic word that refers to the building of a positive character and the practice of leadership, whereas Ta'leem refers to instructional practices. In the same vein, teacher leadership is not a familiar term in Arab countries in general and Qatar in particular, although Qatar is well known for having launched a massive educational reform early in this century and borrowing systems from the West (Sawalhi, 2023).

This study explored teachers' perspectives in private Islamic schools towards teacher leadership. This study contributes to the small pool of research on teacher leadership in Islamic schools. The significance of this work lies in the fact that while teacher leadership has been studied in several contexts, such as the United Kingdom and the United States; however, there is paucity of research examining teacher leadership in Arab countries (Sawalhi, 2019). For example, there have been two PhD studies focusing on teacher leadership, one in Egypt (Eltemamy, 2018) and one in Palestine (Ramahi, 2018). In addition, based on our literature review of several research databases, such as EBSCO, ERIC, and SAGE, this is one of the first studies to examine teacher leadership in Islamic schools in general and in a Muslim country in particular.

Merry (2005) claims that in "Islamic schools, teachers are encouraged to critically examine existing curricula, syllabi, and textbooks to make the revisions necessary for reflecting an Islamic view of humanity as taught in the Quran and the Sunna" (2005, p. 379). However, teachers are not armed with enough resources, training, or support to achieve the expected goals (Memon, 2011). As previous studies have highlighted that teachers' roles go beyond instructional practices in facilitating engagement in leadership activities (Nguyen et al., 2019; Schott et al., 2020), teachers in Islamic schools are required to provide high-quality instructional practices based on Islamic principles, fulfil the parents' expectations, and provide a variety of activities to build positive character and promote engagement in shared leadership practices.

Literature Review

This study follows York-Barr and Duke's (2004) definition of teacher leadership mentioned earlier as an attempt to enhance an agreement and common understanding of teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Leadership is seen in this study as the process of influence which is highlighted in the above definition (Nguyen et al., 2019; Sawalhi, 2019). Teacher leadership can be viewed as both an ethical stance and a belief (Pineda-Báez et al., 2020) that implies the encouragement of continuous learning and the search for new challenges as growth opportunities. In this section, we present the literature on Islamic schools, identify the Islamic principles that might guide teacher leadership, and describe the factors that might affect it.

Islamic Schools

Islamic schools are "private schools that provide an education that is rooted in Islamic faith and ideals, that draws upon the noblest Islamic traditions of science, worship, justice, and Ihsan (doing good), and that seeks to inculcate these values in Muslim students" (Aabed, 2006, p. 23). Although the terms "Islamic schools" and "Muslim schools" may be used interchangeably

in some contexts, in this study we follow researchers who identify Islamic schools formal and informal educational opportunities if they focus on religion, which they integrate into school ethics and the curriculum by following sources of Islamic knowledge. In addition, Islamic schools usually declare a commitment to providing extracurricular activities and enriching their programmes with Islamic principles while Muslims schools mean schools in Muslim countries or school that teach Muslims (Arar et al., 2023; Shakeel, 2018). However, there is no consensus on the definition of Islamic schools, especially since current practices do not define an Islamic pedagogical theory of Islamic educational leadership.

Although Shakeel (2018) conducted a systematic review of Islamic schooling in the West, specifically discussing parental wishes and the quality of Islamic schools, some results might also apply to Islamic schools in Arab countries (e.g., the parents' wish for better education for their children, which would include building positive character), especially with the proliferation of Islamic schools in Muslim countries such as Qatar. Merry (2005) has argued that Islamic schools offer "education for cultural coherence," as these schools provide the students with a set of values that are aligned with those of their families, thereby supporting their well-being, character building, and leadership skills.

Islamic Educational Leadership

Studies on the fundamentals of Islamic leadership, Islamic leadership theories, characteristics of Islamic leaders, and the roles that Muslim leaders play are limited in the Western literature. Aabed (2006) has argued that leadership is "so dependent on the spirit that the essence of it will never be capsuled or codified" (p. 17). Aabed further indicates that Islamic leadership principles were selected mainly from the Holy Quran and from the biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions in government affairs. According to Aabed, a well-structured leadership style guides Islamic leaders in managing Islamic organisations efficiently. For example, *shura* (mutual consultation) for decision-making is a core principle of Islamic leadership. This means that stakeholders and teachers must be encouraged to participate in leadership practices in and outside of schools. However, there is no consensus on what constitutes an Islamic education leadership theory (Samier & ElKaleh, 2019).

Some researchers claim that leadership in Islamic schools differs from that in other schools. Leadership in Islamic schools is guided by Islamic leadership principles, as researchers highlight the need for Islamic educational leadership's conceptual framework (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). However, there is no agreement on this framework, nor on which values should be included within it.

Hammad and Shah (2019) contended that being a leader in a faith-based school requires a "distinctive form of leadership" (p. 945). In doing so, they refer to an important concept in Islam of "Rabbani leadership", according to which "godliness and righteousness are the essential qualities for the leaders, in addition to professional competence" (p. 946).

Scholars have also studied Islamic educational leadership practices in different contexts (Arar et al., 2023). However, recommendations for Islamic leadership frameworks need to be explored, and further empirical studies should be conducted to investigate these frameworks.

Teacher Leadership in Islamic Education

Previous studies have shown that teacher leadership practices go beyond instructional practices and professional development to include tasks such as leading school activities and community events (Grant, 2006; Sawalhi, 2023). In the same vein, researchers have shown that

Islamic schools usually offer supplementary events and religious instruction, through which a religious worldview is integrated into the curriculum and provides “education in the Islamic spirit” to raise faith consciousness (Ahmed, 2012; Shakeel, 2018). These activities are usually led by teachers. In addition, some studies have identified the need to define and practise Islamic pedagogy and to articulate the vision of Islamic schools (Memon, 2011; Memon et al., 2020). For example, Memon (2011) discusses the importance of classroom management, as many teachers in Islamic schools “expressed discomfort with a system that reinforces behaviour through penalties” (p. 292). This aligns with Islamic schools’ focus on building positive character following self-discipline instead of enforcement.

Many researchers have mentioned that teachers who work in Islamic schools must have specific qualities, and that “the most important quality of a Muslim teacher is not what he knows but what he is” (Afandi & Baloch, 1980, p. 157). Moreover, like leaders, teachers face difficulties related to the lack of professional development and resources for teaching the Islamic curriculum (Asadullah et al., 2019; Brooks, 2014; Hammad & Shah, 2019). Studies also stress that the teacher is a murrabi who “disseminates the knowledge through living in it (not with it like the so-called educators do today) [and] performs his duty by inculcating the character into the soul of the student” (Paramboor & Ibrahim, 2013, p. 152). In highlighting the role of teachers in forming students’ attitudes and behaviours, Assadullah (2016) concluded that there is a “systematic correlation between teacher and student attitudes” (p. 161). Teachers play an important role in Islamic religion, however there is lack of studies exploring Islamic-based teaching.

Although Islam encourages being proactive and sharing knowledge with others, being in an Islamic school might not guarantee that all Islamic values would be practised. Not all teachers who work in Islamic schools are Muslims as this observation has been noted by the researchers in both Western and Muslim countries.

Factors Affecting Teacher Leadership

Previous studies show several factors that influence teacher leadership. The next sections clarify the following factors: principals’ and colleagues’ support, as well as demographic characteristics.

Support from School Principals and Colleagues

Another crucial factor that affects teacher leadership is the support from school leaders and colleagues. Angelle and DeHart (2011) have argued that school principals play an important role in creating a culture of teacher leadership in schools. In the same study conducted in the USA, Angelle and DeHart (2011) explain, “Teachers who were given the opportunity to share in leading by the principal gained values as well as beliefs of selfless and democratic work for the good of the school” (p. 145). Nevertheless, the literature also shows that “although progress has been made in recognising that the principal’s job is about creating a culture in which principals and teachers lead together, our experience is that this perspective is not widespread” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 84).

Demographic Characteristics

The teachers’ demographic characteristics are the third prominent factor that affects teacher leadership. Angelle and DeHart (2011) highlighted significant differences in teacher leadership based on many demographic characteristics and included the following observations:

(1) elementary school teachers' scores were higher than secondary school teachers' scores in terms of the Supra-Practitioner and Sharing Expertise factors (will be explained next section); (2) teachers with bachelor's degrees rated higher in Sharing Expertise and Supra-Practitioner than teachers with master's degrees; and (3) teachers who did not have leadership roles had higher scores in Principal Selection than teachers with leadership roles. Likewise, Aliakbari and Sadeghi (2014) found that educational degree and school level were key demographic factors influencing teacher leadership. However, in the same study, other factors such as 'age, gender, and years of teaching experience did not emerge as significant factors' (Aliakbari & Sadeghi, 2014, p. 1). Few studies have explored the impact of gender on teacher leadership, and the results vary in each context, which needs further investigation, especially in the culturally relevant leadership (Aliakbari & Sadeghi, 2014; Asadullah et al., 2019).

Methodology

This quantitative study used Angelle and DeHart's Teacher Leadership Inventory (TLI) to investigate teacher leadership in Islamic schools from the teachers' perspectives. The TLI was designed to measure teachers' perspectives towards the following four factors (Angelle & DeHart, 2011, p. 149–150): Sharing Expertise (Perceptions of teachers' pedagogical methods, classroom management skills, and willingness to share those skills with their colleagues), Sharing Leadership (Perceptions of teachers' willingness to engage in leadership opportunities and of principals' willingness to offer leadership opportunities to teachers), Supra-Practitioner (Perceptions of teachers' willingness to go above and beyond prescribed roles), and Principal Selection (Perceptions of principal controls, and leaders' ability to participate in leadership activities).

The TLI contains 17 items scored on a Likert scale ranging from 4 to 1 with 4= "routinely," 3 = "sometimes," 2 = "seldom," and 1 = "never." The TLI's four factors cover all the teacher leadership practices inside and outside school, as well as the relationships with principals and colleagues.

Table 1

Factors, Definitions, and Survey Items for the Four Models of Teacher Leadership taken from DeHart, 2011, p. 55

Factor	Sub-Factor	Definition	Items
Sharing Expertise (SE)		Perceptions of teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills and their willingness to share those skills with their colleagues	Item 1: Teachers ask one another for assistance when we have a problem with student behavior in the classroom. Item 2: Other teachers willingly assist me if I have questions about how to teach a new topic or skill. Item 3: Teachers here share new ideas for teaching with other teachers such as through grade level/department meetings, school-wide meetings, professional development, etc. Item 4: Teachers discuss ways to improve student learning. Item 7: As a faculty, we stay current on education research in our grade level/subject area.

Factor	Sub-Factor	Definition	Items
Sharing Leadership (SL)	Leadership engagement SL _g	Perceptions of teachers' willingness to engage in leadership opportunities	Item 5: Teachers are involved in making decisions about activities such as professional development, cross-curricular projects, etc. Item 6: Teachers are actively involved in finding ways to improve the school as a whole. Item 13: Teachers plan the content of professional learning activities at my school.
	Leadership opportunities SL _o	Perceptions of principals' willingness to offer leadership opportunities to teachers	Item 12: The principal responds to the concerns and ideas of teachers. Item 14: Teachers have opportunities to influence important decisions even if they do not hold an official leadership position. Item 16: Time is provided for teachers to collaborate about matters relevant to teaching and learning.
Supra-Practitioner (SP)		Perceptions of teachers' willingness to go above and beyond prescribed roles	Item 8: Teachers willingly stay after school to work on school improvement activities. Item 9: Teachers willingly stay after school to help other teachers who need assistance. Item 10: Teachers willingly stay after school to assist administrators who need volunteer help.
Principal Selection (PS)		Perceptions of how principal controls which leaders may participate in leadership activities	Item 11: Administrators object when teachers take on leadership responsibilities. Item 15: The principal consults the same small group of teachers for input on decisions. Item 17: Most teachers in leadership positions only serve because they have been principal-appointed.

The use of a pre-existing instrument meant that our results could be compared with those from other countries (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). In addition, this study was conducted in international schools with teachers selected from different countries, including Western countries, and the instrument's language was easy for them to understand. Moreover, the TLI covers the most teacher leadership factors mentioned in previous studies related to professional development and sharing experience in and outside schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). TLI was used in many studies related to Western countries and Arab countries (Hammad et al., 2023; Sawalhi & Sellami, 2021).

To utilise the TLI tool for our study, appropriate ethical approval was obtained from the National University and the MoE, in addition to separate approval from the instrument's author. Experts at the National University translated the TLI instrument into Arabic. To validate the instrument after the translation, a pilot study was conducted, after which some minor modifications were made to the survey. Angelle and DeHart (2010) confirmed Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 in the original version, whereas through our pilot study, an acceptable reliability level was achieved with Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 for the entire instrument.

Research Questions

This study explores the nature of teacher leadership in Islamic schools in Qatar. Specifically, this study tests the following hypotheses:

H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference between variables affecting teacher leadership in Islamic schools from the teachers' perspective.

H_a : There is a statistically significant difference between variables affecting teacher leadership in Islamic schools from the teachers' perspective.

From the main hypotheses above, the following research questions were derived:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership in terms of their age, gender, qualifications, years of experience, school level, and leadership position?

RQ2: What are the Islamic schoolteachers' perspectives on the four factors of the TLI?

Sample

The questionnaire online link was sent to all private schools in Qatar that called themselves Islamic schools on their websites and profiles ($n=10$). The school principals were sent an invitation letter via email that asked them to share the link with their teachers to participate in the study. Six school principals agreed to send the online link to all teachers internally. The online link was sent to all teachers in the six schools. There were no specific criteria for the selection of teachers other than that they needed to be a part of private Islamic schools. Out of the 530 teachers who worked at these six schools, only 118 teachers filled out the questionnaire (22% response rate).

All the Islamic schools were international schools, and their teachers were from both Arab and Western countries. The teachers are required to integrate Islamic principles into their teaching and provide Islamic extracurricular activities to achieve their school's vision, as the schools declared on their websites. All schools taught KG–12, and each school had boys and girls' sections.

Data Analysis

As this study aimed to test the effect of each variable on each factor, a one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent and unrelated groups. The one-way ANOVA was conducted for each variable (i.e., age, gender, qualifications, years of experience, school level, and leadership position) and for the four TLI factors. The factor scores were calculated by the means of all responses. Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic information. The teachers' nationalities varied: 16% were from Jordan, 35% were from Egypt, 28% were from Western countries (e.g., the United Kingdom and the United States), and the rest were from other Arab countries. Qatari teachers did not participate in the selected private schools' workforce due to the salaries in comparison to Qatari teachers' salaries in the public sector.

Table 2
Demographic Information

		Frequency	Valid percentage
Gender	Male	30	25.4
	Female	88	74.6
	Total	118	
Age (years)	Under 30	21	17.8
	30–39	53	44.9
	40–49	32	27.1
	Over 50	12	10.2
	Total	118	
Degree	Bachelor's	88	74.6
	Postgraduate	30	25.4
	Total	118	
School level	KG	4	.4
	Primary	28	23.7
	Prep	9	7.6
	Sec	25	21.2
	All levels	52	44.1
	Total	118	
Years of experience	Less than 3 years	8	6.8
	3–5 years	19	16.1
	6–10 years	33	28
	11–15 years	20	16.9
	More than 15 years	38	32.2
	Total	118	
Leadership position	Yes	57	48.3
	No	59	50
	Missing data	2	.7
	Total	116	

Results

To determine which factors indicated the teachers' perspectives, the means of the four factors were calculated. Sharing Expertise showed the highest scores (SE > SL > SP > PS). The Principal Selection factor had the lowest scores, which was consistent with the results reported in previous research. This result might indicate the type of leadership the school principals practise, and that there may be a gap between expectations and real practices.

Table 3
Means of the Four Factors

TLI factor	N	Mean
SE	118	3.3322
SL	118	2.8884
SP	118	2.5819
PS	118	2.4944

In this study, age and years of experience did not show significant results, which is consistent with previous studies. However, the results for school level did not show significant results which were inconsistent with those in previous studies (Angelle & DeHart, 2011). The following sections present the results for each variable and show the tests used to examine them.

Gender

Gender was chosen as the main variable in this study, as Islamic schools' segregate students accordingly (see Table 1). The core reason is the obvious segregation of males and females (both teachers and students) in Islamic schools. All six schools have sections for boys and sections for girls.

One-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in the factor scores among males and females. Significant differences were found for the factors SE ($F(9.208), P = 0.003$), SL ($F(4.696), P = 0.032$), and SP ($F(6.523), P = 0.012$), as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Results of One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Gender, SE, SL, and SP

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
SE	Between groups	2.425	1	2.425	9.208	.003
	Within groups	30.552	116	.263		
	Total	32.978	117			
SL	Between groups	2.181	1	2.181	4.696	.032
	Within groups	53.877	116	.464		
	Total	56.059	117			
SP	Between groups	4.285	1	4.285	6.523	.012
	Within groups	76.201	116	.657		
	Total	80.486	117			

Female teachers scored higher in SE, SL, and SP factors than male teachers. However, these results do not necessarily indicate that the female teachers’ practices were better than those of the male teachers. In an earlier study, Sawalhi and Sellami (2021) explored this variable in terms of public schools’ teachers’ attitudes in Qatar and showed that for the Supra-Practitioners factor, male teachers got significantly higher scores than female teachers. Still, this variation is worth exploring in depth, as several studies have found gender-related differences in leadership practices (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017; Sawalhi & Sellami, 2021).

Degree Level

Although significant differences were found for the factors of SE, SL, and Supra-Practitioners in terms of the degree level, it is important to note that 75% of the teachers in this study had only bachelor’s degree. Notably, many Arab teachers might be hired even if they do not have educational degrees in comparison to Western teachers.

For the three factors above, teachers in the bachelor’s degree group reported significantly higher scores than teachers in the postgraduate degree group. Previous studies showed that new teachers value sharing knowledge more than experienced teachers (Aliakbari & Sadeghi, 2014; Angelle & DeHart, 2011). This might be due to postgraduates’ preference to take formal positions and to be compensated for all their work.

Table 5

Results of One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Degree, SE, SL, and SP

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
SE	Between groups	3.435	1	3.435	13.486	.000
	Within groups	29.543	116	.255		
	Total	32.978	117			
SL	Between groups	3.476	1	3.476	7.669	.007
	Within groups	52.582	116	.453		
	Total	56.059	117			
SP	Between groups	5.868	1	5.868	9.122	.003
	Within groups	74.618	116	.643		
	Total	80.486	117			

Leadership Position

Teachers who declared that they did not hold leadership positions in their schools scored one point higher than teachers who did hold leadership positions. Although this aligns with the results of previous studies (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Sawalhi, 2019), significant results were expected for all factors in Islamic schools, as Islam encourages being proactive, sharing knowledge, and helping others. However, this result indicates that there is a difference between personal faith and faith-based leadership (Memon et al., 2020) as many teachers differentiate between their personal and professional practices. It might be noted that educators’ personal beliefs are often ignored when they sign a teaching contract, and teachers tend to focus on technical requirements rather than the purpose of education.

Table 6

Results of One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Leadership Position and PS

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
PS	Between groups	1.692	1	1.692	4.194	.043
	Within groups	45.974	114	.403		
	Total	47.666	115			

Nationality

There were significant results for SL, SE, and SP. Interestingly, nationality was not meant to show significant results, especially since Islamic schools build their practices on unity and Islamic principles. However, this result is consistent with Sawalhi and Sellami’s study (2021), which explored teacher leadership in Qatari government schools. In these schools, nationality was linked to all four factors, although all the teachers were from Arab countries and spoke the same language (see Table 7 below). Notably, the researchers did not find studies that explored this factor in other contexts.

Table 7

Summary of Mann–Whitney U Tests Comparing Nationality and Teacher Leadership Factors

Factors	Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P</i>
SL	Jordan	17	30.12	225	-2.118	.034
	Egypt	41	29.24			
SE	Egypt	41	43.85	498	-2.307	.021
	Western countries	35	32.23			
SL	Egypt	41	48.60	303.5	-4.327	.000
	Western countries	35	26.67			
SP	Egypt	41	46.24	400	-3.345	.001
	Western countries	35	29.43			

Discussion

This quantitative study aimed to explore teachers’ attitudes that affect teacher leadership practices in schools calling themselves Islamic with respect to their communication with the community and their educational plans. Using the TLI to explore the variables affecting teacher leadership practices, we found that many variables did not show significant results (e.g., school level).

Although Islamic schools assume that their teachers’ and school leaders’ practices are different from those of other schools, as they rely on Islamic principles in their teaching and leadership practices (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Hammad & Shah, 2019), the results for many variables were consistent with those of previous studies conducted on other, non-Islamic schools.

In terms of gender, male teachers were less willing than female teachers to share expertise, share leadership, and accept roles beyond their tasks as Supra-Practitioners. This could be due to their consideration of teaching as just a profession and a series of tasks to be done for compensation. Similarly, Riaz (2014) provided many examples of how female teachers are

preferred in Islamic schools due to their professionalism and motherhood practices with students, which take them beyond the formal tasks of teaching. However, Asadullah et al. (2019) found that some Islamic schools might prefer to hire men due to job stability. This might not be applicable in Qatar, as parents do not prefer men to teach female students. In addition, Dantow (2020) has claimed that “to be sure, gender is a defining feature in teachers’ professional lives, as we often hear about teaching as a gendered profession.... We have less information about how it influences reform in schools and districts” (p. 3). In general, the results related to gender are mixed and vary from context to context, and economic and cultural factors might have more of an effect than Islamic principles (Killingsworth et al., 2010).

Islam encourages the pursuit of knowledge to contribute effectively to the community. However, in this study, higher degrees were not correlated with teachers’ willingness to share leadership or go beyond their daily tasks. Remarkably, teachers with bachelor’s degrees tended to share expertise with others more than teachers with postgraduate degrees. The results are similar for Sharing Leadership and Supra-Practitioners. This might be because most teachers in the schools surveyed (and in Qatar in general) have bachelor’s degrees (Sawalhi & Sellami, 2021). Many teachers from Arab countries teach even without a degree in education, which requires them to learn more about their professional requirements, while Western teachers in formal positions are required to have a certificate in education. Islamic schools in Qatar recruit non-Muslim teachers if they have better qualifications, as the schools offer international programmes.

Moreover, teachers with postgraduate degrees might focus more on their formal positions than on voluntary roles, while relatively new teachers tend to volunteer and accept leadership roles. This could be because new teachers are eager to prove their worth and are looking for extra experience and professional development opportunities. In addition, it has been noted that new professionals in many fields tend to look for opportunities to volunteer and take on extra responsibilities to gain experience and build their reputation. This calls for support and encouragement from school leaders, colleagues, and parents.

This study is consistent with previous studies (Angelle & DeHart, 2011) in suggesting that there is a need to review these schools’ selection processes and encourage postgraduate teachers to share knowledge and act as role models. In addition, this shows the importance of nurturing student teachers’ willingness to share new ideas and take on leadership tasks (Sawalhi & Sellami, 2021).

The school-level variable did not show significant results, which might be because most schools subsume all levels under one form of management. This might be due to the school owner’s financial status and pay grade or to the school leaders’ or governors’ decisions. This result indicates the importance of finding solutions to the financial challenges that private schools face in ensuring both quality and a safe and supportive environment.

Remarkably, nationality was highly significant to three factors in this study: Sharing Expertise, Sharing Leadership, and Supra-Practitioners. Islam does not differentiate between people based on their ethnicity; a passport indicates one’s nationality, not ethnicity. Islamic schools in Qatar have different nationalities (among both teachers and students) and might hire both Muslim and non-Muslim staff. Therefore, building a supportive team in a diverse school culture with different religious and national backgrounds might be challenging but is nevertheless highly recommended.

Finally, this study showed that leadership positions affected teachers’ perspectives on the principals’ willingness to engage teachers in decision-making. This variable was the only one

that affected Principal Selection. Teachers who did not have leadership roles showed higher scores than teachers in formal leadership positions, and this finding is like those reported in previous studies (Angelle & DeHart, 2011).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study's results have revealed that teachers scored higher in Sharing Expertise than in the other factors, and Principal Selection had the lowest score. This is a surprising finding for Islamic schools, a place where teachers are generally expected to go beyond their normal tasks. The expectation that principals and Islamic school leaders support all teachers and practice *shura*, as highlighted in the research on Islamic leadership (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018), was also not reflected in the results. This clearly shows that there is a difference between the reality and the expectations regarding Islamic values and practices.

Although this study explored teachers' perspectives on principal selection, it is important to shed additional light on the principal's role. Undoubtedly, principals play an important role in establishing the system and encouraging teachers to contribute to leadership practices (Terzi & Derin, 2016), especially since the aim of Islamic schools is to serve as role models for students and stakeholders (Hammad & Shah, 2019). Considering that teachers have a central role in articulating the school's goals and acting as agents of change (Fullan, 2013), it would be beneficial for the educational leadership frameworks of Islamic schools to be integrated into the school leaders' and teachers' practices (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

It would also benefit teachers to raise the principals' awareness of their role in encouraging teacher leadership opportunities. Additionally, preparing the school culture to embrace any contributions and promote a healthy work environment would help teachers overcome the challenges they face. This would make them more proactive in the way Islamic schools strive to be through their missions and policies.

This study shows that teachers in Islamic schools, like those in any other schools, must build their own identities and be encouraged to lead from where they stand based on their own strengths. Overall, the findings discussed above support the idea that teachers' attitudes towards teacher leadership vary depending on their gender, leadership position, and years of experience. These differences should be taken into consideration by school leadership and policymakers when establishing Islamic schools and creating new systems.

Furthermore, the findings did not show any specific differences in teacher leadership factors unique to Islamic schools, although these schools' vision and mission statements indicate that their school cultures are different from those of other schools. An important implication of this study is the importance of providing teachers and school leaders with preparation programmes aligned with Islamic schools' unique needs and expectations.

Most of the teachers who participated in this study were Muslims, although their schools also have Christian teachers, and this study used self-reported instruments; future studies might need to explore religion as a variable. In addition, Islamic schools aim to encourage future generations to remember Allah and embrace good actions. Therefore, Islamic schoolteachers should represent the school's vision and its values and beliefs as instructional leaders, not only within the school gates but also in the broader society as a whole.

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