

The Role of Leadership Styles in Shaping Teaching Efficacy among High School Teachers

Abstract

This study examines the role of leadership styles—authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire—in shaping the teaching efficacy of high school teachers. Teaching efficacy, a teacher's belief in their ability to execute instructional tasks successfully, is a key determinant of educational quality. Using a cross-sectional survey, data were collected from 475 high school teachers in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, through stratified random sampling. Leadership styles and teaching efficacy were measured using validated scales ($\alpha = 0.937$ and $\alpha = 0.968$, respectively). Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships for democratic ($r = 0.203$, $p = 0.002$) and authoritative ($r = 0.267$, $p = 0.001$) leadership, and a significant negative relationship for laissez-faire leadership ($r = -0.257$, $p = 0.007$). Regression analysis confirmed democratic leadership as the strongest positive predictor of teaching efficacy ($\beta = 0.328$), followed by authoritative ($\beta = 0.171$), while laissez-faire negatively predicted efficacy ($\beta = -0.123$). These findings highlight that teachers' leadership styles are crucial determinants of professional confidence and effectiveness, emphasizing the need for explicit leadership training in teacher development programs.

Keywords: Teaching Efficacy, Authoritative Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Laissez-faire Leadership, High School Teachers

Introduction

The classroom functions as a dynamic ecosystem where the teacher's role transcends knowledge dissemination to include leadership. Leadership style significantly shapes professional confidence and instructional effectiveness, central to teaching efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Teaching efficacy reflects a teacher's belief in their ability to organize and execute instructional tasks, influencing strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Leadership styles refer to the characteristic approaches teachers use to guide, manage, and motivate students. This study focuses on three styles based on Lewin's framework (1939):

- **Authoritative:** Provides clear direction and structured support while encouraging student input.
- **Democratic:** Encourages collaboration, shared decision-making, and open communication.
- **Laissez-faire:** Grants high autonomy with minimal guidance or feedback.

This study addresses the question: How do different leadership styles shape a teacher's sense of efficacy in the classroom?

Need and Significance of the Study

The teacher's role in the 21st-century classroom has evolved from a mere knowledge transmitter to that of a leader who shapes the classroom climate and influences student outcomes. Central to a teacher's effectiveness is their sense of **teaching efficacy**—the belief in their capability to organize and execute teaching tasks successfully. While multiple factors contribute to teaching efficacy, the specific leadership style adopted by the teacher is a critical, yet underexplored, determinant in the Indian context.

Current teacher training and professional development programs predominantly emphasize pedagogical content knowledge and instructional strategies, often overlooking the formative influence of leadership behaviors. Understanding how authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles distinctly impact a teacher's professional confidence is therefore of paramount significance.

This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the relationship between leadership styles and teaching efficacy among high school teachers. The findings are significant as they provide:

1. **For Teachers:** A framework for self-assessment, enabling them to understand how their leadership approach influences their professional confidence and effectiveness.
2. **For Teacher Educators:** Evidence-based insights to advocate for the integration of leadership training into pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula.
3. **For Policymakers and Administrators:** A rationale for designing targeted professional development programs and mentorship initiatives that foster effective, efficacy-building leadership practices in schools.

Ultimately, by clarifying this relationship, the study aims to contribute to the development of more confident, effective teachers and, consequently, more successful and engaging learning environments.

Operational Definitions of the Terms Used

Teaching Efficacy: Teachers' belief in their ability to successfully accomplish instructional tasks, measured via the Teaching Efficacy Scale (TES).

Leadership Styles: The approach a teacher uses to guide, influence, and engage students, classified as Authoritative, Democratic, or Laissez-faire.

Authoritative Leadership: A style defined by clear structure, rules, and expectations, ensuring order while potentially limiting student autonomy.

Democratic Leadership: A participatory approach encouraging collaboration, shared decision-making, and consideration of students' perspectives.

Laissez-faire Leadership: A non-directive, hands-off style with minimal teacher control, offering students high levels of independence.

High School Teachers: Educators teaching students in Grades IX and X following the Tamil Nadu State Board curriculum.

Variables of the Study :**Independent Variables:***Leadership Styles (Authoritative, Democratic, Laissez-faire).* **Dependent Variable:***Teaching Efficacy*

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the prevalence of authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles among high school teachers.
2. To examine the relationship between each leadership style (authoritative, democratic, laissez-faire) and the teaching efficacy of high school teachers.
3. To determine the predictive power of leadership styles on the teaching efficacy of high school teachers.

Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between leadership styles (authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire) and the teaching efficacy of high school teachers.

H2: Leadership styles are significant predictors of teaching efficacy among high school teachers.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was employed. The sample consisted of 475 high school teachers from schools within the Coimbatore Corporation, Tamil Nadu, India. Participants were selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across different types of schools (Government, Government-aided, Corporation, and Private).

Tools Used:

1. **Leadership Styles Scale (LSS):** A 49-item scale constructed and validated by the researchers (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.937$) to measure teachers' preference for authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles.
2. **Teaching Efficacy Scale (TES):** A 46-item scale with high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.968$) used to assess teachers' beliefs in their instructional and classroom management capabilities.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the prevalence of leadership styles. Inferential statistics, including Pearson's Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, were employed to test the hypotheses and determine the predictive power of the leadership styles on teaching efficacy.

Table 1: Prevalence of Leadership Styles among High School Teachers (N=475)

Leadership Style	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Democratic	221	46.536
Authoritative	144	30.316
Laissez-faire	110	23.158
Total	475	100

The results in Table-1 indicate that among the 475 respondents, the Democratic leadership style is the most prevalent, adopted by 46.53% (N = 221) of teachers. This is followed by the Authoritative style at 30.32% (N = 144) and the Laissez-faire style at 23.16% (N = 110), reflecting a clear preference for participative leadership.

Finding: The democratic leadership style was the most commonly adopted approach, followed by authoritative. Laissez-faire was the least prevalent but still used by a substantial minority.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between leadership styles (authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire) and the teaching efficacy of high school teachers.

Table 2: Correlations between Leadership Styles and Teaching Efficacy of High School Teachers

Leadership Style	Correlation Coefficient (r) with Teaching Efficacy	p-value
Authoritative	0.267**	0.001
Democratic	0.203**	0.002
Laissez-faire	-0.257**	0.007
**p < 0.01		

The correlation analysis (Table 2) reveals significant relationships between leadership styles and teaching efficacy among high school teachers. Authoritative (r = 0.267, p = 0.001) and

democratic ($r = 0.203$, $p = 0.002$) leadership styles exhibit positive relationships with teaching efficacy, whereas the laissez-faire style ($r = -0.257$, $p = 0.007$) shows a significant negative relationship. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level.

Findings: These results indicate that leadership styles are significantly associated with teaching efficacy. Specifically, authoritative and democratic leadership enhance teachers' professional confidence and instructional effectiveness, while laissez-faire leadership diminishes it. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_01 stating no significant relationship is rejected, confirming that leadership styles play a meaningful role in shaping teaching efficacy among high school teachers.

H₀₂: Leadership styles are not significant predictors of teaching efficacy among high school teachers.

Table 3: Regression Analysis: Leadership Styles as Predictors of Teaching Efficacy of High School Teachers

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	125.129		10.780	0.000
Authoritative Leadership	0.365	0.171	3.876	0.000
Democratic Leadership	0.849	0.328	7.828	0.000
Laissez-faire Leadership	-0.280	-0.123	-2.888	0.004
Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.175$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.168$. The model was significant, $F(4, 470) = 24.955$, $p = 0.000$.				

The regression analysis indicates that leadership styles significantly predict the teaching efficacy of high school teachers. Democratic leadership ($\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.000$) is the strongest positive predictor, followed by authoritative leadership ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.000$), both positively influencing teaching efficacy. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership ($\beta = -0.123$, $p = 0.004$) negatively predicts efficacy. The model explains 17.5% of the variance in teaching efficacy ($R^2 = 0.175$) and is statistically significant ($F = 24.955$, $p < 0.001$).

Findings: Leadership styles collectively have a significant impact on teaching efficacy, confirming that different approaches distinctly affect teachers' effectiveness. Democratic and authoritative leadership enhance professional confidence and classroom performance, while laissez-faire leadership diminishes efficacy. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_{02} stating that leadership styles are not significant predictors is rejected, validating that leadership styles are important predictors of teaching efficacy among high school teachers.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that a teacher's chosen leadership style is a fundamental shaper of their professional efficacy, not a peripheral concern. The data reveals a clear hierarchy of influence: democratic leadership plays the most potent role in fostering efficacy, followed by authoritative leadership. In contrast, the laissez-faire style actively erodes it.

The **democratic style** likely enhances efficacy by empowering teachers through successful collaborative experiences. Fostering a sense of shared responsibility and participatory decision-making reinforces a teacher's belief in their ability to engage and motivate students.

The **authoritative style** builds efficacy by providing a clear framework for success. The combination of high expectations, structured guidance, and supportive feedback allows teachers to accumulate mastery experiences, which Bandura (1997) identifies as the most powerful source of efficacy beliefs. Conversely, the **laissez-faire style** fails to provide these formative experiences. The lack of structure, clear expectations, and consistent feedback can lead to classroom uncertainty and a perception of uncontrollable dynamics, directly diminishing a teacher's sense of agency and efficacy.

Practical Implications

The study's findings have important implications for educational practice. Pre-service and in-service teacher training programs should extend beyond pedagogical content knowledge to include explicit instruction, modelling, and practice of effective leadership behaviours, particularly democratic and authoritative styles. Schools can further support professional growth by establishing professional learning communities and workshops, enabling teachers to observe, discuss, and refine their leadership approaches as a core professional competency. Additionally, experienced teachers demonstrating effective leadership should mentor newer colleagues, guiding them in developing classroom leadership that enhances teaching efficacy rather than undermines it.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that a teacher's leadership style significantly shapes their teaching

efficacy. Democratic leadership emerged as the most influential positive predictor, followed by authoritative leadership, whereas laissez-faire leadership negatively impacts efficacy. These results suggest that adopting participative and structured leadership approaches enhances teachers' professional confidence and classroom effectiveness. Educational institutions should integrate explicit training and mentorship in effective leadership practices to foster higher teaching efficacy, ultimately contributing to more engaging and successful learning environments.

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