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Changing with the Times: Report on School Leadership in a Society in Transition

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Abstract: The present study examined the status of leadership in the secondary education sector of a society in transition from an economic engine based on tribal ties and oil production to one that is diversified and meritocratic. It focused on high schools as one of the focal points of top–down interventions intended to promote social change. The study relied on the MLQ-5x to collect the views of leadership styles and outcomes that high-school leaders (principals) attribute to themselves and that constituents (teachers) attribute to them. A stratified random sample of high schools in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia was tested. In this study, transformational leadership was the prevailing style for both leaders' self-attributions and constituents' attributions, suggesting that change is now an accepted notion. However, only a moderate level of agreement existed between leaders and constituents on the actual persons who embody it, thereby indicating that the translation of abstract ideas into practical realities is a work in progress.

Keywords: leadership; Middle East; school management; economic and social change

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1. Introduction

In a society in transition from a patriarchal order defined by tribalism and uncertainty avoidance [1–3] to one fostering gender equity and embracing change, leadership is key to a successful outcome. The present study focused on Saudi Arabia (SA) as a prototypical example of such a society [4,5], where a flurry of decrees, declarations, and financial investments from the top, all the offspring of the 2030 Vision [6], have begun to promote a knowledge-based society that grants women and men equal status by relying on meritocracy [7,8]. Undeniably, challenges exist [9,10], but progress is palpable. For instance, the remnants of a strictly gender-segregated society have been slowly dismantled, thereby allowing women to enter professions that were previously forbidden as well as to work alongside men.

The leaders and constituents of the education system of SA are those entrusted with the instruction of the very people who are expected to make the 2030 Vision a sustainable reality [6]. Thus, our study aimed to (a) identify the leadership styles reported by high school leaders in the eastern region of SA and their association with leadership outcomes (e.g., extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction); (b) compare leaders' self-attributions with their constituents' attributions to assess whether differences exist; (c) identify demographic characteristics that may be correlated with self-attributed leadership styles or with the styles attributed to leaders by their constituents. While school reforms have been the subject of a considerable number of studies around the world, research devoted to the examination of the secondary education system of SA following the development and progressive implementation of the 2030 Vision is scarce, especially through the voices of the teachers and administrators who are the primary executors of a plan to reform teaching and

learning in that system [11,12]. The plan, which is commonly known as *Tatweer*, is intended to create an educated workforce that can meet the challenges of a globalized economy.

In the following sections, we first define leadership styles and related outcomes. We then overview the current secondary educational system of SA, which is intended to realize the 2030 Vision of the SA society. The available evidence of leadership styles in the education system of SA is presented before illustrating the methodology adopted by our research and its results.

2. Leadership and Its Key Outcomes

Leadership style is a combination of different dispositions and behaviors that are used by leaders in interactions with their constituents [13]. While there may be disagreement concerning what leadership is, the one common theme across the extant literature is that leadership is important as it is linked to constituents' performance attainment [14]. One of the most popular categorizations of leadership styles is that of Bass [15,16], which recognizes three main styles: transactional, transformational, and passive/avoidant [17].

Transactional leadership (TSL) is focused on the contractual relationship that exists between leaders and constituents [18]. It involves a carrot and stick approach [19], whereby constituents' actions are driven by the enticement of rewards and the avoidance of penalties. TSL fosters the status quo and dependency on leaders. As such, it is often defined by three traits: contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception [20]. Contingent reward refers to the actions of leaders, which consist of setting constituents' objectives and related performance expectations, as well as executing a reward and punishment system to achieve objectives [21]. Active management by exception pertains to the monitoring of constituents' actions to ensure the proper execution of tasks and the identification and resolution of issues [22]. Passive management by exception pertains to leaders' reactive approach, whereby actions are taken after issues arise [23].

Transformational leadership (TFL) is conceptualized as a style that encourages constituents to put organizational goals above their self-interest and contribute beyond stated expectations. Leaders devote their attention not only to the attainment of organizational goals that fulfill a shared vision, but also to the development of constituents' competencies, through changes in attitude, motivation, interest, and behavior. Thus, TFL is change-driven [16]. Its style is defined by traits such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation [20]. Idealized influence refers to leaders' attributes, such as charisma, confidence, integrity, and trustworthiness. It embodies leaders' ability to articulate a clear and appealing vision that constituents can easily internalize [24]. Inspirational motivation refers to the extent to which leaders can instill confidence and a sense of purpose in their constituents, thereby challenging them to achieve the organizational objectives that underscore the common vision [25]. Individualized consideration pertains to the leaders' disposition towards mentorship and coaching. It embodies leaders' respect for and interest in their constituents, which may include addressing their idiosyncratic necessities and praising their unique abilities [18]. Intellectual stimulation refers to leaders' ability to challenge the status quo of an organization, including taking risks and responding to innovations [26].

Passive/avoidant leadership (PAL) is characterized by leaders who are absent in the direct management of organizational objectives, including their elaboration and ways to attain them [27]. In a nutshell, passive/avoidant leaders tend not to interfere with the constituents' decision-making processes, giving them control of the organization [28].

In the extant literature, key leadership outcomes are extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction [29]. Extra effort refers to one's motivation for enhanced performance beyond required expectations. Effectiveness pertains to one's ability to meet organizational objectives and needs. In the eyes of constituents, effectiveness is closely tied to the leader being driven, as well as being able to inspire and prioritize needs, which are emblematic aspects of TFL [30]. Satisfaction is related to the extent to which either leaders or constituents are pleased with their working conditions. Some evidence exists that these desirable lead-

ership outcomes are more likely to be linked to TFL than to the other styles [31–34], but contradictory findings also exist [35].

3. Secondary Education in SA

In SA, formal education started in 1925. Before, the so-called Kuttab was operative, under which a student would learn from a teacher to read and write as well as memorize the Holy Quran. In 2003, the Ministry of Education was created [36] to control public and private K–12 schools, and higher education institutions [7]. Currently, formal education is organized into primary (ages 6–11), middle school (ages 12–14), high school (ages 15–17), and higher education (age 18 and beyond). In this paper, the term secondary education is used to refer to high school.

Education is key to the success of the 2030 Vision. In 2007, the Ministry of Education put forth *Tatweer* (i.e., King Abdullah's Project for the Development of Education) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all SA educational institutions and thus prepare a workforce for a knowledge-based economy that fits the demands of the global marketplace [37]. *Tatweer* focuses on empowering districts and schools to manage, lead, and sustain change, improving curricula, instruction, and assessment through alignment with international standards as well as increased reliance on technology. To do so, *Tatweer* aims at school curriculum development, teacher training, enhancement of students' learning environment, and enrichment of their cognitive, social, and emotional learning [38,39]. Specific changes entail discarding rote memorization and a teacher-centered model to develop students' practical and scientific skills within a student-centered approach. *Tatweer* fosters the recognition of individual differences in learning as well as the importance of critical thinking, knowledge integration, and applications to real-life problems. In this context, professional development activities, especially in information technology, are seen as the backbone of teaching and learning [40]. Another critical aspect of *Tatweer* is self-evaluation, which enables schools to appraise themselves on several criteria, including curriculum, teaching, extracurricular activities, counseling, and professional development. At its core, self-evaluation is intended to support the decentralization of the education system.

Given the size of the country, the Ministry of Education has decentralized operational tasks to school districts. The school district administrator (superintendent) is expected to oversee the implementation of policy, programs, and planning in the district to which he/she has been assigned. Each high school has a principal who reports to the superintendent of the district under which the high school operates. School principals and teachers are seen as the key contributors to the implementation of *Tatweer*. Education reform implies changes that are complex and lengthy [36,38]. Thus, questions have arisen regarding the leadership of principals, such as whether their duties and responsibilities are directed to the development of local schools rather than to the mere management of day-to-day operations [41]. The collection of comprehensive evidence on how well education reforms work and match practice has just begun [11,42].

4. Evidence of Leadership Styles in the Educational Institutions of SA

The success of the 2030 Vision relies not only on education reforms but also on leaders who are expected to implement them. Evidence on the current status of the leadership in the educational sector is rather meager, as well as mixed, at best suggesting that the 2030 Vision and the leadership in the field are yet to be flawlessly aligned. Furthermore, most studies of leadership in SA have focused on the perceptions of leaders [43–46]. Although leaders may attribute to themselves a style, there is no guarantee that this self-attribution fits the constituents' views [46]. For instance, Wirbaa and Shmailan [43] who surveyed managers' leadership styles at universities in the eastern region of SA, found that most managers attributed TFL to themselves, while the rest claimed to practice TSL. However, in their review of leadership in the public educational sector, Algarni and Male [44] noted that the current system fosters maintenance and management of the status quo instead of development and innovation, thereby perpetuating TSL. Alyami and Floyd [11] found

the current educational system to remain highly centralized, with top-down decision-making, little school autonomy, and excessive bureaucracy. Instead, Alqahtani et al. [45], who interviewed principals of public secondary schools in the SA region of Asser, found them to devote attention to standards of academic success, the development of teachers, relationships with parents, and school climate, thereby exhibiting TFL.

It was hypothesized that TFL would be the best fit for the 2030 Vision of the Saudi establishment because TFL embraces change, seen as progress and development, which is at the heart of the 2030 Vision. In contrast, TSL openly promotes adherence to the status quo through its focus on regulations and norms to which constituents are expected to comply [32]. Thus, leaders' self-attributions of TFL coexisting with constituents' attributions of such a style to leaders would be prima facie evidence that the 2030 Vision has been internalized by key representatives of the educational system of SA. The association of TFL with desirable outcomes (e.g., extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction) would also be supporting evidence. It was further hypothesized that if the emphasis on meritocracy of the 2030 Vision has been internalized by such parties, its gender-equity theme would render differences between male and female leaders or constituents moot. Yet, although all schools are expected to comply with the 2030 Vision's theme of equitable education for all, public schools' embrace of western models of instruction, curriculum, and assessment has been recent. As accommodation requires time, differences between the private and public sectors might be found, such as a greater endorsement of TFL among the constituents and leaders of private high schools. In contrast, differences between sectors might be moot if the theme of equitable education has become a broadly internalized value.

5. Method

5.1. Participants

Participants included 463 constituents (teachers) and 24 leaders (school principals). Specifically, there were 123 constituents in male public schools (m-public), 127 in female public schools (f-public), 91 in male private schools (m-private), and 122 in female private schools (f-private). Each group of constituents entailed 6 high schools randomly selected from a pool of 642 in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. Thus, there were 6 leaders for each type of school.

5.2. Materials and Procedure

Participants were selected through stratified random sampling of high schools in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. High schools were defined as offering grades 10–12. At the time of the study, there were 642 high schools in the Eastern Province (sampling frame), employing 16,545 teachers and serving 170,185 students. The high schools of the identified sampling frame were organized into four main groups: 223 public institutions for males, 230 public institutions for females, 121 private institutions for males, and 68 private institutions for females.

Within each group, six schools were randomly selected. In the data set, the selected schools were represented by codes to ensure the anonymity of the participants as well as the classification of participants into their respective school groups. After permission from the Ministry of Education was granted, an invitation to participate was forwarded to school leaders by the General Department of Education of the eastern region. Upon receiving each leader's approval to conduct the research, the teachers in each school were contacted. Informed consent was obtained from constituents and leaders. They were assured that anonymity would be preserved and informed that their data would be organized by school type. The research was conducted under the purview of the IRB of XXXX. The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association for the treatment of participants in educational research.

An updated version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x) [20] was administered to measure leadership styles and outcomes [47]. The MLQ-5x is a 45-item questionnaire that requires responses on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not at all) to

4 (frequently, if not always). On this scale, the values 3 (fairly often) and 4 (frequently, if not always) indicate endorsement of the trait that participants are asked to judge. The MLQ-5x assesses three styles: TFL, which includes idealized influence (attribution), idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; TSL, which incorporates contingent reward, and management-by-exception (active); and PAL, which encompasses management-by-exception (passive) and laissez-faire leadership. Three leadership outcomes are also examined: extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction.

Two versions of the questionnaire were distributed electronically. A self-rating form was given to leaders, and a form for rating leaders was given to constituents. Both questionnaires had been professionally translated into Arabic by Mind Garden. Cronbach's Alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency, was 0.94 for the scale given to constituents, and 0.78 for the scale given to leaders, thereby suggesting adequate reliability.

5.3. Data Analyses

Data analyses were driven by the research questions that framed our study. Section 6.1 examined the leadership styles and outcomes reported by constituents and leaders through descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics (e.g., ANOVA) were utilized to identify differences among constituents based on their gender and high school type (public versus private). Section 6.2 assessed whether the reports of leaders and constituents regarding styles and outcomes agreed. Section 6.3 asked whether, in the minds of both leaders and constituents, leadership styles were related to particular outcomes. Lastly, Section 6.4 probed further the reports of the participants of our study by examining whether specific demographic characteristics were linked to leadership styles and outcomes. Correlational analyses were the main tool for addressing the questions in Sections 6.2–6.4.

6. Results

The average participation rates of constituents was 82.0% (range: 60.0–100.0%). All leaders accepted the invitation to participate. Results of inferential statistics described below were considered significant at the 0.05 level. In all tables, statistically significant results are marked with an asterisk (*), whereas *ns* refers to results that are not significant. Results are organized by the question they are intended to answer.

6.1. What Are the Dominant Leadership Styles and Outcomes?

Due to the number of leaders per group of schools (n = 6), ranking was utilized to examine leaders' responses as a function of school type and gender. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the leaders' self-attributed styles and outcomes. In this table, values 3 and 4 are indices of endorsement. Thus, leaders, irrespective of school type and gender, could be said to claim for themselves TFL and TSL. They also endorsed all leadership outcomes, albeit there were group differences if ranking is performed. In public schools, extra effort and satisfaction were valued the most by male leaders, whereas satisfaction was valued the most by female leaders. Instead, in private schools, effectiveness was valued the most by both male and female leaders. It is important to note though that within each group differences between outcomes were minor.

Constituents selected TFL for their leaders. They also attributed to their leaders all the leadership outcomes (see Table 2).

To examine whether differences existed, a 2 (type of school: public versus private) and X 2 (gender: male versus female) ANOVA was conducted on the ratings of each leadership style (see Table 3), and of each outcome (see Table 4).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation (in parenthesis) of leaders' responses organized by type of school and gender.

Leadership Style	Mean	M-Public	F-Public	M-Private	F-Private
Transformational	3.41	3.08 (0.46)	3.49 (0.34)	3.43 (0.26)	3.65(0.25)
Transactional	3.12	2.90 (0.48)	3.04 (0.68)	3.25 (0.40)	3.27(0.35)
Passive/Avoidant	0.76	0.96 (0.31)	0.27 (0.22)	1.00 (0.39)	0.81(0.45)
Outcomes					
Extra Effort	3.69	3.50 (0.35)	3.94 (0.14)	3.56 (0.34)	3.78 (0.40)
Effectiveness	3.66	3.29 (0.29)	3.83 (0.30)	3.71 (0.37)	3.79 (0.40)
Satisfaction	3.71	3.50 (0.45)	4.00 (0.00)	3.67 (0.41)	3.67 (0.41)

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation (in parenthesis) of constituents' responses organized by type of school and gender.

Leadership Style	Overall	M-Public	F-Public	M-Private	F-Private
Transformational	3.16 (0.73)	2.99 (0.73)	3.31 (0.67)	3.09 (0.79)	3.22 (0.73)
Transactional	2.87 (0.68)	2.77 (0.66)	2.91 (0.70)	2.69 (0.66)	3.06 (0.66)
Passive/Avoidant	1.30 (0.72)	1.39 (0.65)	1.18 (0.72)	1.19 (0.73)	1.41 (0.77)
Outcomes					
Extra Effort	3.22 (0.98)	3.09 (0.98)	3.48 (0.81)	3.15 (1.06)	3.15 (1.06)
Effectiveness	3.34 (0.86)	3.20 (0.93)	3.55 (0.68)	3.31 (0.95)	3.29 (0.86)
Satisfaction	3.41 (0.88)	3.26 (0.99)	3.62 (0.65)	3.34 (0.97)	3.38 (0.87)

Table 3. The results of the ANOVA on constituents' leadership style ratings.

Main Effect of Type of School	*F*	*df*	*MSE*	*p*	Partial Eta^2
Transformational	0.02	1, 459	0.525	*ns*	
Transactional	0.40	1, 459	0.447	*ns*	
Passive/Avoidant	0.05	1, 459	0.513	*ns*	
Main Effect of Gender					
Transformational	10.58	1, 459	0.525	*	0.02
Transactional	15.96	1, 459	0.447	*	0.03
Passive/Avoidant	0.01	1, 459	0.513	*ns*	
Interaction					
Transformational	1.91	1, 459	0.525	*ns*	
Transactional	3.38	1, 459	0.447	*ns*	
Passive/Avoidant	10.52	1, 459	0.513	*	0.02

Table 4. The results of the ANOVA on constituents' leadership outcome ratings.

Main Effect of Type of School	*F*	*df*	*MSE*	*p*	Partial Eta^2
Extra Effort	1.97	1, 459	0.950	*ns*	
Effectiveness	0.68	1, 459	0.731	*ns*	
Satisfaction	0.73	1, 459	0.764	*ns*	
Main Effect of Gender					
Extra Effort	4.09	1, 459	0.950	*	0.009
Effectiveness	3.10	1, 459	0.731	*	0.009
Satisfaction	4.60	1, 459	0.764	*	0.013
Interaction					
Extra Effort	4.37	1, 459	0.950	*	0.010
Effectiveness	3.88	1, 459	0.731	*	0.011
Satisfaction	2.94	1, 459	0.764	*ns*	

Females rated TFL and TSL higher than males, suggesting that there were gender differences in the extent to which these styles were judged to be present in the workplace. Furthermore, a significant interaction between school type and gender was uncovered for PAL. Tests of simple effects indicated that, in public schools, males rated PAL

higher [$t(248) = 2.43$, $p = 0.016$], whereas in private schools, females rated PAL higher [$t(211) = 2.17$, $p = 0.031$], thereby suggesting that constituents' perception of PAL varied by workplace type.

There were gender differences in all leadership outcomes. Females rated these outcomes as more prevalent than males. However, there were two significant interactions involving extra effort and effectiveness, implying that reports of these outcomes in the workplace differed. Tests of simple effects indicated that in public schools, females judged extra effort higher [$t(248) = 3.40$, $p = 0.001$], whereas in private schools, there was no gender difference [$t(211) < 1$, *ns*]. Tests of simple effects on ratings of effectiveness indicated a similar pattern. Namely, in public schools, females rated effectiveness higher [$t(248) = 3.40$, $p = 0.001$], whereas in private schools, there was no gender difference [$t(211) < 1$, *ns*].

6.2. Do Perceived Leadership Styles and Self-Reported Styles Agree? Do Perceived and Self-Reported Outcomes Agree?

A Pearson correlation was computed for each leadership style and outcome reported by leaders and constituents. A coefficient of determination was also calculated to clarify the degree to which the ratings were in agreement (see Table 5).

Table 5. Agreement on Leadership Styles and Outcomes.

	Correlation		Coefficient of Determination
Leadership Style			
Transformational	+0.67	*	44.49%
Transactional	+0.35	*ns*	
Passive/Avoidant	+0.44	*	19.10%
Outcomes			
Extra Effort	+0.31	*ns*	
Effectiveness	+0.09	*ns*	
Satisfaction	+0.47	*	22.47%

Leaders and constituents agreed on the evaluations of TFL and PAL. They only agreed on one leadership outcome (i.e., satisfaction). The agreement was overall moderate though.

6.3. Are Leadership Styles Related to Particular Outcomes?

A Pearson correlation was conducted between leaders' self-attribution of leadership styles or constituents' attribution of styles to leaders and estimated leadership outcomes (Table 6). In leaders, TFL was related to extra effort and enhanced effectiveness, whereas, in constituents, it was related to all outcomes. Constituents also saw TSL as positively linked to all leadership outcomes, even though coefficients of determination indicated weaker links than those exhibited by TFL. In leaders, the relationships between TSL and leadership outcomes failed to reach significance, albeit it was in the same direction. PAL was related to diminished effort and satisfaction in leaders, and diminished effort, satisfaction, and effectiveness in constituents. If the association with desirable outcomes is considered an indication of appreciation, participants' opinions are clear. TFL was viewed most favorably, followed by TSL. PAL was viewed unfavorably.

6.4. Do Demographic Characteristics Relate to Particular Leadership Styles and Outcomes?

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the demographic characteristics of leaders and constituents, respectively. Educational level was coded as either BA/BS or advanced graduate degree before a point-biserial correlation was conducted on educational level and styles or outcomes as variables. Leaders' educational level did not display any significant relationship, $rs \leq 0.40$, $n = 24$, *ns*. Instead, the higher the educational level of the constituents, the higher was the reported evaluation of leaders' TSL, $r = +0.09$, $n = 463$, $p < 0.05$, and PAL, $r = +0.15$, $n = 463$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 6. Agreement on leadership styles and outcomes.

Leaders	Extra Effort		Effectiveness		Satisfaction	
Transformational	+0.45 *	(20.25%)	+0.54 *	(29.16%)	+0.34	(11.56%)
Transactional	+0.28		+0.33		+0.23	
Passive/Avoidant	−0.55 *	(30.25%)	−0.27		−0.52 *	(27.04%)
Constituents						
Transformational	+0.89 *	(79.21%)	+0.90 *	(81.00%)	+0.94 *	(88.36%)
Transactional	+0.61 *	(37.21%)	+0.61 *	(37.21%)	+0.70 *	(49.00%)
Passive/Avoidant	−0.71 *	(50.41%)	−0.79 *	(62.41%)	−0.68 *	(46.24%)

Note: Coefficients of determination are in parentheses.

Table 7. Leaders' demographic data.

Demographic Characteristics	
Educational Level	BA/BS = 83.3% Advanced degree = 16.7%
Location of University Granting Degree	SA = 87.5% Other = 12.5%
Age	Less than 30 = 0.0% From 30 to less than 35 = 12.5% From 35 to less than 40 = 16.7% From 40 to less than 45 = 20.8% 45 or more = 50.0%
Years of Administrative Experience	From 1 to fewer than 5 = 33.3% From 5 to fewer than 10 = 4.2% From 10 to fewer than 15 = 16.7% From 15 to fewer than 20 = 16.7% 20 or more = 29.2%
Years of Administrative Experience at Current School	From 1 to fewer than 5 = 58.3% From 5 to fewer than 10 = 20.8% From 10 to fewer than 15 = 16.7% From 15 to fewer than 20 = 4.2% 20 or more = 0.0%
Leadership Training Courses	Fewer than 3 = 12.5% From 3 to fewer than 7 = 29.2% From 7 to fewer than 10 = 33.3% From 10 to fewer than 12 = 4.2% 12 or more = 20.8%

A Spearman correlation coefficient was computed on the other demographic characteristics. For leaders, the only significant relationships were those between TSL and age, $rs = -0.50$, $n = 24$, $p < 0.05$, and between effectiveness and years of administrative experience, $rs = +0.42$, $n = 24$, $p < 0.05$ (other $rs \leq 0.39$, *ns*). Namely, as age increased, leaders tended not to attribute TSL to themselves. As experience increased, leaders were more likely to attribute effectiveness to themselves. The other correlations failed to reach significance, $rs \leq 0.39$, *ns*. For constituents, no significant relationships were uncovered for these variables, $rs \leq 0.09$, *ns*.

Table 8. Constituents' demographic data.

Demographic Characteristics	
Educational Level	BA/BS = 93.3% Advanced degree = 6.7%
Location of University Granting Degree	SA = 76.9% UK = 0.9% US = 0.6% CA = 0.2% Other = 21.4%
Age	Less than 30 = 14.5% From 30 to less than 35 = 17.5% From 35 to less than 40 = 19.2% From 40 to less than 45 = 25.0% 45 or more = 23.8%
Years of Experience with Current Leader	Fewer than 5 = 70.0% From 5 to fewer than 8 = 16.8% From 8 to fewer than 11 = 5.4% From 11 to fewer than 14 = 3.0% 14 or more = 4.8%
Years of Teaching Experience	Fewer than 5 = 15,6% From 5 to fewer than 8 = 17.9% From 8 to fewer than 11 = 17.0% From 11 to fewer than 14 = 14.9% 14 or more = 34.6%

7. Discussion

The main findings of the current study can be summarized in four points. First, leaders endorsed both TFL and TSL, whereas constituents endorsed TFL. Leaders saw desirable leadership outcomes, such as extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction, in themselves. Constituents also saw these outcomes in their leaders. Furthermore, TFL was viewed most favorably (as measured by its correlation with desirable outcomes), followed by TSL, whereas PAL was viewed unfavorably.

In SA, reports of TFL may reflect the current status of the society as a whole which is in transition from an economic and social system based on oil revenues and tribal affiliations to one that is diversified and sustainable [48,49]. In such a system, patriarchy is discarded in favor of meritocracy for both men and women [50,51]. TFL is particularly suited to SA for several reasons. For instance, its recognition of the importance of consensus [52] fits the practices of the collectivistic culture of SA. It operates on a vision, which is the model upon which the 2030 plan rests. A vision can greatly reduce the uncertainties that accompany broad structural changes, especially for SA citizens who are known for their uncertainty avoidance [2].

Second, in the present study, both leaders and constituents expressed moderate agreement on the attributions of TFL. These findings are compatible with those of other researchers, such as Feinberg et al. (2005) [53] who found agreement on perceptions of TFL between leaders (i.e., managers) and subordinates in a business setting. In the field of nursing, Failla and Stichler [54] also reported overall agreement between managers' self-perceptions and subordinates' perceptions of their managers' leadership styles. Our findings, however, contrast with those of Sharma and Nair [55] who reported differences in the leadership perceptions of leaders and constituents in the business field of banking.

Irrespective of the field, in leadership research, the degree of agreement or level of congruence between leaders' self-evaluations and constituents' evaluations of them is deemed impactful [56–60]. Views of leadership can shape the behavior of both leaders and constituents and thus may determine leadership outcomes, such as satisfaction, effectiveness, and willingness to engage in effortful activities [12,61,62]. If leaders' self-perceptions

of their styles, skills, and performance are not accurate, problems are likely to arise as their effectiveness relies on interactions with constituents [63].

Our finding that constituents not only attributed TFL to their leaders but also valued effectiveness along with other desirable outcomes is consistent with the meta-analysis of Lowe et al. [64]. Their analysis found a positive relationship between transformational behaviors and constituents' ratings of leaders' effectiveness as well as objective measures of organizational effectiveness, irrespective of the private or public nature of the organization. The meta-analysis of Fuller et al. [65] also supports a positive relationship between TFL and leadership effectiveness. In addition, other studies have reported similar positive relationships between TFL and other outcomes, such as constituents' satisfaction and effort [66,67].

Third, a small number of demographic characteristics of either leaders or constituents were associated with leadership styles or outcomes. The positive relationship between leaders' years of administrative experience and their self-attributed effectiveness has a common-sense appeal as well as support in the literature [68,69], but it is not widespread. Bird and Wang [70], for example, did not find demographic variables, such as age and years of experience, to be related to self-described leadership styles.

In contrast to the intuitive appeal of the relationship between years of experience and self-attributed effectiveness, the concept of TSL needs to be deconstructed to understand its negative relationship with age. To this end, one may consider that TSL promotes the status quo through its focus on establishing standards and norms of conduct, underscoring responsibilities, monitoring, and taking corrective actions in response to deviations from pre-set expectations. In a society, such as SA, undergoing a transition toward a different economic system, older employees may be more likely to notice changes in the workplace than younger people who have entered the education system while the reforms were in place. For the former, a decline of a style reflecting a past of rigidly centralized decision-making and less the future of decentralization envisioned by *Tatweer* [37–41] may be rather noticeable.

Regarding constituents, the higher the educational level, the more the constituents saw their leaders as adopting TSL and PAL styles, both of which were less valued than TFL. These findings may reflect the higher expectations for change that constituents with more formal education are likely to express towards their leaders. The higher the expectations, the more likely the constituents are to see leaders as failing to promote change.

Fourth, when the type of school and the gender of the constituents were examined, there were notable gender differences. Among constituents, females saw their leaders as adopting TFL and TSL more than males. Women are a demographic group who only recently has been granted agency rights equivalent to those of men, illustrating a state of ambiguity in the workplace between promoting change (as per TFL) and preserving order and the status quo (as per TSL).

In private high schools, females attributed PAL to their leaders more than males, whereas the opposite was true for public high schools. The differences between public and private schools regarding PAL can be understood by considering that PAL is an unfavored style and that voicing disagreement from within an organization depends on the relative power of its members. In public schools, the remnants of the patriarchal structure of the SA society may still preserve the authority of males, thereby allowing male constituents to be more vocal in their expression of dissent. In private schools, the remnants of the patriarchal society may have been largely dismantled, thereby allowing female constituents to be more vocal in their expression of dissent. Consistent with this interpretation, in public schools, female constituents rated extra effort and effectiveness in their leaders higher than male constituents. That is, in a context of male dominance, women's dissent may be counterproductive, but the overt recognition of the values of meritocracy, such as effort and operational effectiveness, is feasible and advantageous. Indeed, the reported frequency of such properties illustrates women's awareness that a path exists for attaining professional

success and thus for conquering and preserving the gender equity status they sought for so long.

7.1. Implications

The findings of our study contribute to the extant literature by including an understudied population [71] of a society undergoing a transition to a different social and economic order [72]. Although this study is just one point on a continuum of change that needs to be investigated further, we believe theories of TFL can benefit from a longitudinal approach whereby social systems that vary in their rate of change are examined at different points in time to highlight the dynamic interplay of assimilation and accommodation between leaders and their constituents.

More broadly, the findings of our study contribute to research on how cultural values impact human behavior. Cross-cultural validation of leadership theories rests on the assumption that one cannot fully understand the true meaning of a leadership style if contextual factors are ignored [73]. To this end, Jung et al. [74] have noted commonalities between TFL and collectivistic cultures. In a collectivistic culture, homogeneity is valued, responsibility for goal accomplishment is shared, and group harmony is prioritized. These values reinforce the theme of mutual interdependence which is emphasized by TFL, thereby making it a feasible tool for exercising change in a collectivistic cultural setting, such as SA.

The purported link between economic growth and educational systems is often mentioned in calls for education reforms as a way to address social and economic problems. In SA, fluctuating oil prices and diminishing oil reserves drive the need to develop a new economy. An educational system that can adequately serve the envisioned model of economic development is key to broader changes [6,75,76]. Not surprisingly, *Tatweer* has implemented a broad package of educational reforms to create a well-educated population, trained in a variety of disciplines, and with the necessary skills to sustain a knowledge-based economy. In it, educators and administrators are those entrusted with the training and instruction of the very people who are expected to make the 2030 Vision a reality [6]. Namely, they are seen as one of the most powerful driving forces of economic renewal.

Reports identifying the salient leadership style and outcomes in a specific sector of SA are important for determining not only whether the economic and social changes, which are the goals of the 2030 Vision, are achievable but also whether progress has been made. In light of the widespread recognition that TFL fosters change in the workplace [16,26], the evidence collected in the present study suggests that in the education sector, change is achievable through TFL. Yet, constituents and leaders modestly agree on the particular person who is a transformational leader. Moderate levels of agreement suggest that interventions intended to enhance leaders' self-awareness as well as the knowledge that constituents possess of their leaders may be needed to ensure that TFL becomes a concrete reality. Indeed, how can TFL motivate constituents to transcend their self-interests for a collective purpose, vision, and/or mission, if constituents do not entirely recognize this style in their particular leaders?

7.2. Limitations

The current study has several limitations. First, if disclosure of private views is seen as problematic by research participants, the results of self-report measures may be shaped by self-censorship [77]. If so, the findings of the present study can be said to provide only a limited window into what leaders think of themselves and what constituents think of their leaders. Second, the absence of in-depth interviews of both leaders and constituents along with the lack of performance indices are additional limitations. Thus, the link between views of leadership and actual behaviors is largely untested [78]. Third, although participation rates were satisfactory, it is reasonable to ask whether the individuals who failed to participate were substantially different from those who responded. Although participants' anonymity made comparing the characteristics of responders and non-responders unfeasible, the preliminary data of a systematic replication of our study, currently underway,

have largely reproduced the present findings [79]. Fourth, the extent to which TFL and servant leadership may coexist is unknown. Both TFL and servant leadership emphasize an appreciation of the constituents and their empowerment, through listening, mentoring, and teaching. However, for servant leadership, the achievement of organizational objectives is a secondary outcome [80].

In the present study, the evidence collected regarding leadership styles and outcomes is that changes in the workplace, brought about by *Tatweer*, are generally recognized by both leaders and constituents. Yet, changes in the workplace may bring with them cultural dissonance [81], which denotes people's confusion and conflict experienced when confronting a cultural environment that is moving away from more traditional values and beliefs (e.g., rejection of memorization as a learning tool). To this end, one is reminded that compliance or dissent are two alternative strategies to deal with cultural dissonance. The men and women who work in the public and private schools included in our study may differ in their adoption of either approach and in the extent to which it is explicitly expressed. Thus, the cultural environment currently permeating public and private schools [82] and other sectors of society [83] is to be investigated further.

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