

Practicing leadership skills by the Sultanate of Oman school principals according to the Kouzes and Posner model



Maryam A. Balushi^a | Ali M. Jubran^{ab}  | Aida B. Qasimi^a

^aFaculty of Education and Arts, Sohar University, Sohar, Oman.

^bFaculty of Education, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.

Abstract This study aimed to investigate the extent to which public school principals in the Sultanate of Oman practice leadership skills in light of Kouzes and Posner's leadership challenge model. The study determined that for the research question: To what extent do public school principals in Oman practice leadership skills according to the Kouzes and Posner model from the perspective of teachers? The researchers applied A descriptive approach and the study sample was selected randomly. It was consisted of 472 male and female teachers from different public schools in Oman (cycle one, cycle two and post basic education schools). The study instrument was a questionnaire composed of five subdomains (Model the Way, Inspire Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart), distributed across 33 items, and validated for reliability and accuracy. Data collection had done through the survey. The results showed that the degree of public-school principals' practice of leadership skills according to the leadership challenge model was very high with a mean score of 4.25 at a significant level α 0.05. The study recommended the need for a comprehensive training program for school principals on the basis of the leadership challenge model. Additionally, the ability to inspire a shared vision and empowering staff for leaders should be strengthened through training courses and workshops. This study further highlights that empowering staff is crucial issue to enhance their achievements through fostering innovation and acknowledge staff achievements. The training programs at the Specialized Leadership Training Center under the Ministry of Education in Oman should be integrated.

Keywords: leadership practices, Kouzes, Posner theory

1. Introduction

Educational philosophy varies from time to time because of the changes taking place worldwide, particularly in light of the rapid growth of information and technological development across various fields, including economics, society, and technology. Compared with the past, the educational field has undergone a radical transformation, as it serves as the foundation for developing societies and shaping individuals according to the demands of the era. Educational institutions are the starting point for societal change and the development of knowledge that keeps pace with evolving global trends. Thus, the role of educational institutions is embodied in preparing responsible citizens who contribute to the service of their nation and society. The success of this process hinges on the presence of wise and balanced leadership that provides guidance, nurtures human potential, and builds a solid base of human and intellectual resources capable of confronting global challenges and fostering a conscious and capable society.

The school principal is considered the driving force behind the educational process, bearing numerous responsibilities and routine tasks that contribute to the success of education. The principal's role is to increase ideas and potential, address obstacles hindering the learning process, focus on human and intellectual resources, and stimulate creative energy by motivating all staff within the educational institution. The development and refinement of these leadership skills require ongoing training programs to keep pace with advancements in the educational field (Al-Mutairi, 2018).

The process of attaining an administrative position in the educational field requires specific procedures, skills, and practical experience of no less than five years. A school principal is only appointed after undergoing competency tests, interviews, and accumulating practical experience, along with acquiring a set of administrative skills that qualify them for the position. These skills enable the principal to achieve the desired goals and push the educational process forward. Additionally, the school principal plays a crucial role in enhancing teachers' motivation, encouraging them, and attending to their psychological and social needs, ensuring that these factors are considered when assigning tasks. Importantly, the principal plays a role in the continuous improvement and development of the educational process, with a constant focus on advancing the educational institution and its outcomes (Ayesh, 2018).



The role of the principal as a leader is reflected in their practices within the school community. A principal who embodies educational leadership serves as an inspiration and motivator, supporting staff and students both inside and outside the institution while addressing their psychological and emotional needs and boosting their morale. The principal, as a dynamic and positive force, exerts a beneficial influence on the surrounding environment. This leadership is also evident in encouraging creativity and instilling values of citizenship in both staff and students, which are later reflected in their actions. The principal, therefore, serves as a role model within the school (Al-Asiri, 2012).

The roots of leadership trace back to the 19th century, when Thomas Carlyle proposed that great leaders possess innate traits and skills that set them apart from others. He argued that these characteristics are not something that can be acquired. This gave rise to what Carlyle called the "Great Man Theory," the first leadership theory. According to this theory, leaders have high capabilities and effective skills to influence others, coupled with intelligence and wisdom. They also have the ability to bring about improvement and change in society because of their inherent talent (Al-Husseini, 2021).

It can be concluded that the administrative process is continuous and ever-changing, requiring updates in all aspects—human, technical, administrative, and intellectual—according to global developments. On the basis of modern philosophies, many behaviors and procedures followed by leaders and decision-makers need to be revised to develop and improve all aspects of the educational process. This should be done through a series of well-thought-out actions that achieve the desired changes, leading to an administrative balance in the educational system that aligns with the surrounding environment and the realities of contemporary life.

In light of the above, the need to develop the leadership skills of school principals in response to contemporary challenges is urgent and must be addressed. Within modern theories of leadership-based management, a new philosophy has emerged: the leadership challenge by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner.

The leadership challenge practices first take shape in five practices: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart, uplifting employees' morale (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Many studies have explored leadership skills. For example, the study by Al-Adamat (2004) aimed to examine the degree to which directors of education in Jordan exhibit leadership behavior and its role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The sample consisted of 264 department heads from education directorates in three regions of Jordan, selected using a stratified random sampling method. The researcher utilized two questionnaires to collect data: one to measure job satisfaction and another to assess organizational commitment. The study concluded that there is a positive correlation between leadership behavior, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.

Tipton's study (2007) aimed to compare the self-perceptions of school principals regarding their leadership practices, focusing on those who had undergone leadership training versus those who had not. The Leadership Challenge indicators by Kouzes and Posner were used as the measurement tool. The study's sample included 368 principals. The data were collected through a questionnaire, and the results revealed statistically significant differences attributable to the duration of leadership training, which had a positive impact on leadership practices in educational institutions.

The study by Attari and Al-Shanfari (2007) sought to determine the extent to which teachers and staff in education directorates in Oman perceive their empowerment in authority. The researchers employed a questionnaire for data collection, with a sample of 341 participants selected purposively. The findings indicated that the respondents' empowerment in authority was perceived to be at a moderate level.

The study by Piaw, Hee, Ismail, and Ying (2013) aimed to assess the extent to which secondary school principals in Malaysia practice leadership skills. The researchers adopted a quantitative methodology and applied a questionnaire to 152 principals. The results revealed that the principals' practice of leadership skills was rated as high. Moreover, the findings showed no statistically significant differences in the practice of leadership skills based on gender.

Al-Habbabi's study (2014) aimed to identify the role of transformational leadership in motivating employees. A sample of 283 principals was randomly selected, and a descriptive methodology was adopted using a questionnaire as the data collection tool. The findings revealed that transformational leadership played a moderate role in employee motivation. While no statistically significant differences were observed based on years of experience, differences based on gender were significant, favoring female principals.

Micheal, Anpe, and Gambo's study (2015) focused on identifying essential leadership skills for secondary school principals in Nigeria. Using a randomly selected sample of 50 principals and a questionnaire as the primary tool, the study concluded that enhancing leadership skills is critical for improving student academic performance.

The study by Jubran and Abu Mokh (2017) sought to determine the extent to which school principals in Palestine practice leadership skills. The sample consisted of 230 teachers, selected randomly, and the researchers utilized a questionnaire to collect data. The results showed that principals' practice of leadership skills was rated as high. Additionally, the findings indicated no statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership skills based on gender, experience, or academic rank.

Al-Saadi and Al-Dhiyani's research (2018) aimed to explore the leadership skills of school principals in Sana'a, Yemen. The researchers adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology and utilized a questionnaire with a sample of 394 teachers. The

findings revealed that principals' leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, were rated as moderate. The study also confirmed no statistically significant differences attributable to years of experience.

The study by Al-Hajjah (2021) aimed to examine the extent to which school principals in Ramallah, Palestine, practice leadership skills and their relationship with administrative accountability. The researcher employed a descriptive correlational methodology, with a sample of 351 teachers selected using stratified random sampling. The results indicated that the principals' practice of leadership skills was rated as high. The findings also revealed no statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender, experience, or educational qualifications. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a strong positive correlation between leadership skills and administrative accountability.

Jackson (2018) focused on leadership skills that improve student achievement in Florida, USA. Using a qualitative approach, Jackson studied leadership practices in three high-performing elementary schools, identifying key practices that supported student achievement, especially in low-performing rural schools.

Al-Zahrani's (2019) study examined the leadership skills of school principals in Al-Baha, Saudi Arabia, from teachers' perspectives. Using a correlational descriptive method, the study surveyed 865 teachers chosen through stratified random sampling. A leadership skills questionnaire was used, and the results indicated a high level of leadership skills among school principals. Statistically significant differences were found on the basis of educational level and qualifications, whereas no differences were linked to experience.

Wahba (2020) investigated the leadership skills of principals in the Carmel and Galilee regions via Kouzes and Posner's model and their relationship with teachers' educational creativity. With respect to 415 teachers, Wahba employed a correlational descriptive survey method. Data were collected through two questionnaires, one measuring leadership skills and the other measuring educational creativity. The study revealed no significant differences in leadership skills based on gender, experience, or qualifications. However, there was a positive relationship between leadership skills and educational creativity.

Al-Zuabi (2022) study aimed to develop a leadership training program based on Kouzes and Posner's model, gathering insights from principals, supervisors, and teachers in both public and private schools. The study used a mixed-methods approach and included a sample of 422 participants. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study revealed that the practice of leadership skills by school principals was moderate, with significant differences based on gender, experience, and job title but no differences related to academic qualifications.

Jabareen and Shatnawi's study (2022) aimed to examine the extent to which school principals in the Green Line area in Jordan practice leadership skills and their relationship with administrative creativity. The researchers employed a descriptive correlational methodology and administered a questionnaire to a stratified random sample of 803 teachers. The findings revealed that school principals demonstrated a high level of leadership skills. Moreover, the study established a positive correlation between leadership skills and administrative creativity.

Deebajah (2022) aimed to investigate the role of school administration in empowering teachers in the Ramtha District of Jordan. The researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, with a sample of 272 teachers selected using a cluster random sampling technique. The findings indicated that the role of school administration in empowering teachers was rated as moderate. Additionally, no statistically significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions based on gender or years of experience.

This study differentiates itself by focusing on leadership challenge theory, which is a modern framework in leadership studies.

1.1. Study problem and question

On the basis of the researchers' practical experience in the educational field, it has been observed that school principals in Oman lack certain leadership skills, specifically intellectual skills and human relations skills, and require professional training in organizational skills. The study problem was further identified through a preliminary survey conducted by researchers with 15 teachers on June 3, 2023, aiming to determine whether the leadership practices of school principals were effective in supporting the educational process. The results indicated a deficiency in some leadership skills, particularly in future planning, staff empowerment, and motivation.

The inconsistencies in these areas were attributed to several factors, such as time constraints, workload, large student populations, and the focus on classroom responsibilities. Some respondents indicated that the lack of effective future planning was due to insufficient experience and understanding among some school principals, as they lacked the basic principles required for its implementation. This gap was further linked to inadequate guidance from professional training centers in enhancing leadership skills, particularly in the area of future school planning. Another respondent noted that staff empowerment was not fully activated due to insufficient training for school principals in developing and empowering their staff's capabilities, with some principals lacking the experience needed to apply this skill effectively.

In light of this, the study seeks to answer the following primary question:

- To what extent do public school principals in Oman practice leadership skills according to the Kouzes and Posner model from the perspective of teachers?

1.2. Study objective

The study aims to identify the extent to which school principals in Oman practice leadership skills according to the Kouzes and Posner model from the perspective of teachers to determine the prevailing leadership framework in the educational field.

1.3. Study significance

This study aligns with the efforts of the Specialized Center for Professional Training of Teachers, which is part of the Ministry of Education in Oman, to improve the quality of education in light of the Oman Vision 2040. Additionally, the study will provide valuable insights to professional training and development centers within the Ministry's directorates by helping them design training programs focused on leadership skills, which are based on Kouzes and Posner's leadership challenge model, to enhance job performance.

1.4. Study limitations

This study is limited in that it examines the leadership practices of school principals in public schools across various governorates of Oman, on the basis of Kouzes and Posner's leadership challenge model, during the first semester of the 2023–2024 academic year.

1.5. Study terminology

1.5.1. Leadership skills

Leadership skills are defined as "high-performance behaviors of a human and professional nature that leaders practice in managing social and professional institutions to achieve specific goals. For this study, they refer to a set of traits and abilities observed among the sample members and measured using numerical values on the basis of their responses to the study instrument" (Al-Qaddah, 2013, p. 439).

Operationally, researchers define leadership skills as the abilities that school principals possess to work effectively with their staff, inspire and motivate them, and empower them to achieve the educational institution's common goals. These skills are measured according to the study tool developed for this purpose.

1.6. Leadership challenge

The leadership challenge refers to a set of behaviors practiced by a leader within their institution, encompassing five key practices: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Operationally, the researchers define it as the leadership skills and behaviors that school principals in North Al Batinah, Oman, employ in the school environment to ensure high educational standards. These practices include modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, enabling staff to achieve the vision, boosting morale, and motivating individuals.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used a descriptive research methodology, which was deemed appropriate given the study's objectives. The current study employed a questionnaire as its primary instrument. Given the descriptive nature of the study, the researchers selected a leadership skills scale to accurately describe and assess the phenomenon under investing. The content validity of the instrument was evaluated by a panel of experts in the Arabic language and educational leadership from Sohar University and Yarmouk University. These experts reviewed the scale to determine whether the items were appropriate or required modification. On the basis of their recommendations, several items were revised to enhance clarity and ensure the instrument's relevance. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was between .881 and .962, which indicated high reliability.

The study population consists of teachers from public schools in North Al Batinah Governorate, Oman, during the 2023–2024 academic year. The total population was 11,123 teachers distributed across various school types, including cycle one, cycle two, and post basic education and grades 11 and 12 schools as indicated by the statistical data obtained from the Annual Statistics Book of the Ministry of Education (2023). The study sample consisted of 472 teachers selected randomly on the basis of the Krejcie and Morgan table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

3. Results and Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the development of leadership skills among public school principals in Oman. The results are presented according to the following study question:

"To what extent do public school principals in Oman practice leadership skills according to Kouzes and Posner's leadership challenge model, from the perspective of teachers?"

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the participants' responses were calculated to determine the degree of leadership skill practices among school principals. The following scale was used to interpret the results (Table 1).

Table 1 Categories of scale.

Range	Degree of Practice
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low
1.80 – 2.59	Low
2.60 – 3.39	Medium
3.40 – 4.19	High
4.20 – 5.00	Very High

The following tables show the results for the degree to which public school principals practice leadership skills.

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the study sample's estimates regarding the extent to which public school principals practice leadership skills. The overall mean for the tool was ($M=4.25$), with a general standard deviation ($SD=0.72$), indicating a very high degree of practice. The highest-ranked domain was "empowering others," with a mean of ($M=4.34$) and a standard deviation of ($SD=0.74$). This domain was followed by the "encouraging the heart," with a mean of ($M=4.28$) and a standard deviation of ($SD=0.83$). In third place were the domains of "Inspiring a Shared Vision," "Challenging the Administrative Process," and "Modeling the Way," all of which had identical means ($M=3.21$) but varying standard deviations ($SD=0.82$, $SD=0.78$, and $SD=0.72$, respectively).

This result may be attributed to school principals' awareness of the importance of developing human capital and providing opportunities for staff to demonstrate their capabilities through engagement in administrative tasks and participation in solving daily school-related challenges. It may also indicate the presence of a motivating work environment based on dialog, respect for differing opinions, and recognition of the significance of encouragement and motivation in enhancing teachers' performance. Another potential contributing factor is the training courses that school principals have undergone to qualify them for their roles. These findings align with those of previous studies, including those of Al-Zuabi (2022). The findings of this study are consistent with those reported in previous research by Al-Adamat (2004), Jubran and Abu Mokh (2017), Tipton (2007), and Piaw, Hee, Ismail, and Ying (2013). In contrast, they differ from the results of studies by Micheal, Anpe, and Gambo (2015) and Al-Saadi and Dahyani (2018), which identified a moderate level of leadership skills.

For the individual items within each domain, the results were as follows:

Table 2 Means and standard deviations of participants' responses on the degree of leadership skills practiced by public school principals, ranked in descending order on the basis of mean values.

Rank	No	Domain	Mean	StD	Degree of Practice
1	4	Enabling Others	4.34	4.7	Very High
2	5	Encouraging the Heart	4.28	0.83	Very High
3	2	Inspiring a Shared Vision	4.21	0.82	Very High
3	3	Challenging the Process	4.21	0.78	Very High
3	1	Modeling the way	4.21	.72	
Overall Scale			4.25	0.72	Very High

3.1. First: Domain one: Model the way

Table 3 illustrates the overall mean and standard deviation for the items in the first domain: Model the Way. The degree of practice is notably very high, with an overall mean of $M=4.21$ and a standard deviation of $SD=0.72$. The item "The principal strives to be an exemplary role model and meets the expectations of staff" ranked first, with the highest mean of $M=4.40$. The second-ranked item was "The principal fulfills the promises made," with a mean of $M=4.35$. The third-ranked item was "The principal shows confidence in their leadership philosophy," with a mean of $M=4.30$. The last-ranked item was "The principal seeks feedback from others on actions and practices that affect staff performance," which had the lowest mean of $M=3.86$.

This result may be attributed to the awareness among school principals of the importance of embodying positive behaviors and values in their interactions with teachers, as this has a direct effect on staff performance. Additionally, it may be linked to the criteria used in selecting qualified leaders to manage schools, ensuring that they serve as role models for teachers in the school environment. The lower ranking of the fifth item suggests that principals may be preoccupied with routine tasks and daily problem solving, making them less attentive to seeking feedback from teachers regarding their practices.

This aligns with the findings of studies conducted by Al-Hajjah (2021), Al-Zuabi (2022), Jubran and Abu Mokh (2017).

Table 3 Means and standard deviations of the items in the "Model the Way" domain.

Rank	No	Items	Mean	StD	Degree of Practice
1	2	The principal strives to be an exemplary role model and meets the expectations of staff	4.40	.79	Very high
2	1	The principal fulfills the promises made	4.35	.79	Very high
3	6	The principal shows confidence in their leadership philosophy	4.30	.91	Very high
4	3	The principal self-assesses to ensure commitment to agreed-upon principles and standards	4.23	.92	Very High
5	4	The principal engages everyone in formulating the values practiced by the school	4.10	.98	High
6	5	The principal seeks feedback from others on actions and practices that affect staff performance	3.86	1.12	High
Overall			4.21	.72	Very high

3.2. Second: Domain two: Inspire a shared vision

Table 4 illustrates the overall mean and standard deviation for the items in the second domain: "Inspiring a Shared Vision." The degree of practice is rated as very high, with an overall mean of $M=4.21$ and a standard deviation of $SD=0.82$. The item "The principal communicates the ultimate value of work and its purpose to the school staff" ranked first, with the highest mean of $M=4.33$. The second-ranked item was "The principal discusses future expectations and directions with the teachers," with a mean of $M=4.29$. The third-ranked item was "The principal provides a clear and comprehensive picture of the school's aspirations that may affect work," with a mean of $M=4.28$. The last-ranked items were "The principal engages others in developing a clear future vision for the school" and "The principal describes convincingly what the school could become in the future," both with a mean of $M=4.11$.

Researchers attribute these findings to the lack of collaborative future planning between principals and teachers, likely due to insufficient awareness of the importance of this element in advancing the educational institution. Additionally, it may be related to limited financial and human resources, as well as inadequate training in developing long-term strategic plans. Furthermore, there may be a lack of material support for implementing strategic plans, compounded by numerous administrative regulations and policies that may hinder the execution of future plans at the school level.

These results are consistent with the studies of Al-Zahrani (2019), Al-Hajjah (2021)Wahbah (2020), and Jackson (2022). However, they differ from the findings of Micheal, Anpe, and Gambo (2015).

Table 4 Means and Standard Deviations of the Items in the Domain of "Inspiring a Shared Vision".

Rank	No	Items	Mean	StD	Degree of Practice
1	12	The principal communicates the ultimate value of work and its purpose to the school staff	4.33	.92	Very high
2	7	The principal fulfills the promises made	4.29	.89	Very high
3	8	The principal shows confidence in their leadership philosophy	4.28	.92	Very high
4	9	The principal self-assesses to ensure commitment to agreed-upon principles and standards	4.13	.96	High
5	11	The principal engages everyone in formulating the values practiced by the school	4.11	.96	High
5	10	The principal seeks feedback from others on actions and practices that affect staff performance	4.11	.99	High
Overall			4.21	0.82	Very high

3.3. Third: Domain three: Challenge the process

Table 5 shows the overall mean and standard deviation for the items in the third domain: "Challenging the Administrative Process." The degree of practice is rated as very high, with an overall mean of $M=4.21$ and a standard deviation of $SD=0.78$. The item "The principal seeks to take initiative and lead change, responding effectively to it" ranked first, with the highest mean of $M=4.31$. The second-ranked item was "The principal encourages others to try new approaches, even in the face of challenges," with a mean of $M=4.29$. The third-ranked item was "The principal raises expectations for others to inspire them to work with confidence," with a mean of $M=4.27$. The last-ranked items were "The principal asks others what can be learned when things do not go as planned" and "The principal works in unconventional ways to foster innovation and improve the work process," both with a mean of $M=4.10$.

Researchers attribute these findings to the awareness among school principals of the importance of taking the initiative and leading unconventional efforts to facilitate the development of new strategies that align with current changes while giving staff confidence to experiment with new approaches. This may also be due to the alignment between research recommendations and training courses offered by the specialized center for preparing school leaders, emphasizing the importance of innovation and challenging rapid societal changes that affect the school environment.

The findings of this study implicitly align with those of Al-Adamat (2004), Jubran and Abu Mokh (2017) and Jackson (2018). In contrast, they differ from the findings of Micheal, Anpe, and Gambo (2015) as well as Al-Sadi and Dahiany (2018), which reported a moderate level of leadership skills.

Table 5 Means and Standard Deviations of the Items in the Domain of "Challenging the Administrative Process".

Rank	No	Items	Mean	StD	Degree of Practice
1	15	The principal seeks to take initiative and lead change, responding effectively to it.	4.31	.87	Very high
2	17	The principal encourages others to try new approaches, even in the face of challenges.	4.29	.87	Very high
3	20	The principal raises expectations for others to inspire them to work with confidence.	4.27	.93	Very high
4	14	The principal sets realistic, measurable goals to ensure continuous progress.	4.26	.86	Veryhigh
5	19	The principal supports others in facing challenges and learns from and with them.	4.20	.95	Veryhigh
6	13	The principal seeks difficult challenges to test their skills and capabilities.	4.13	.96	High
7	18	The principal asks others what can be learned when things do not go as planned.	4.10	.93	High
7	16	The principal works in unconventional ways to foster innovation and improve the work process.	4.10	.96	High
		Overall	4.21	0.78	Very high

3.4. Fourth: Domain four: Empower others

Table 6 presents the overall mean and standard deviation for the items in the fourth domain: "empowered others." The degree of practice is rated as very high, with an overall mean of $M=4.34$ and a standard deviation of $SD=0.74$. The highest-ranking item, "The principal treats others with respect," had a mean of $M=4.57$. The second-ranked item was "The principal establishes professional relationships with others on the basis of collaboration and cooperation," with a mean of $M=4.43$. The third-ranked item was "The principal helps teachers with professional growth and development," with a mean of $M=4.37$. In contrast, the lowest-ranked item was "The principal involves others in making decisions that directly affect their job performance," with a mean of $M=4.14$.

Table 6 Means and Standard Deviations of the Items in the Domain of Empowering Others.

Rank	No	Items	Mean	StD	Degree of Practice
1	21	The principal treats others with respect.	4.57	.74	Very high
2	22	The principal establishes professional relationships with others based on collaboration and cooperation.	4.43	.80	Very high
3	28	The principal helps teachers with professional growth and development.	4.37	.86	Very high
4	26	The principal believes that professional development for staff is based on acquiring new skills.	4.35	.84	Very high
5	27	The principal helps others to achieve their best version of themselves.	4.31	.90	Very high
6	24	The principal allows staff the freedom to complete their tasks in their own way.	4.29	.87	Very High
7	23	The principal listens and considers others' perspectives.	4.24	.92	Very high
8	25	The principal involves others in making decisions that directly affect their job performance.	4.14	.93	High
		Overall	4.34	0.74	Very high

The findings can be attributed to the adherence of school administrations to Islamic ethics in their interactions with teaching staff. Additionally, school principals place significant emphasis on the human relationships they build with their teaching staff, which greatly contributes to improved performance. Notably, these results indicate a commitment by school administrations to enhancing academic performance by providing teachers with the necessary resources, such as workshops tailored to their needs. The efficient use of teachers' time to complete school tasks reflects the existence of a positive organizational climate within the school.

This study aligns with the findings of Jabarin and Shatnawi (2022) and Jackson (2018). In contrast, the study by Deebajah (2022) and Attari and Al-Shanfari (2007) reported a moderate level of empowerment skills among educational leaders.

3.5. Fifth: Domain five: Encouraging the heart

Table 7 presents the overall means and standard deviations for the items in the fifth domain: "encourage the heart." The degree of practice is rated as very high, with an overall mean of $M=4.28$ and a standard deviation of $SD=0.83$. The highest-ranking item, "The principal praises high achievers in front of everyone," had a mean of $M=4.39$. The second-ranked items, "The principal shows confidence in others' abilities" and "The principal makes others feel that their contributions are valued and appreciated," both had a mean of $M=4.33$. In contrast, the lowest-ranked item was "The principal shares success stories of influential individuals to highlight their values," with a mean of $M=4.13$.

The researchers attributed this result to the significant presence of encouragement and motivation in schools, indicating that school principals are aware of the importance of these factors in improving performance. Additionally, the influence of social media platforms in promoting this culture, as well as school administrations' awareness of the need to enhance communication and human relations skills in the school environment, may have contributed to these findings. The result may also be linked to intensive training programs that principals undergo, which enhance their emotional and social intelligence, helping them motivate staff and increasing the school's performance level.

This study aligns with the findings Jackson (2018), who reported a high level of teacher empowerment in distance learning. Additionally, the findings of this study implicitly align with those of Al-Hajjah (2021), Al-Zuabi (2022), Wahba (2020), and Piaw, Hee, Ismail, and Ying (2013). However, these results differ from those of Al-Hababi (2014) and Al-Zahrani (2019), where the level of employee motivation and encouragement was found to be moderate.

Table 7 Means and Standard Deviations of the Items in the Domain Encouraging the Heart.

Rank	No	Items	Mean	StD	Degree of Practice
1	30	The principal praises high achievers in front of everyone.	4.39	.89	Very high
2	32	The principal shows confidence in others' abilities.	4.33	.89	Very high
2	34	The principal makes others feel that their contributions are valued and appreciated.	4.33	.91	Very high
3	29	The principal reinforces high achievers.	4.32	.96	Very high
4	31	The principal provides rewards and reinforcement in innovative ways to those who have achieved successes in school projects.	4.18	1.02	high
5	33	The principal shares success stories of influential individuals to highlight their values.	4.13	1.01	High
Overall			4.28	0.83	Very high

4. Conclusion

This study, grounded in Kouzes and Posner's "The Leadership Challenge" theory, has examined the crucial elements of leadership, teacher empowerment, and employee motivation within educational settings. The findings underscore the importance of the five practices of exemplary leadership outlined in Kouzes and Posner's model: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Through the application of these leadership practices, it became evident that effective educational leadership not only depends on the behaviors and actions of school leaders but also on their ability to empower teachers and motivate staff. The results of this study align with Kouzes and Posner's assertion that leadership is not about a title or position, but about the ability to inspire, empower, and encourage others to achieve shared goals. Leaders who model exemplary behaviors, foster a collaborative vision, and provide opportunities for professional growth enable their teams to thrive.

This study further highlights that empowering educators through autonomy, fostering innovation and acknowledging their achievements plays a pivotal role in cultivating a positive school culture while significantly enhancing staff motivation and engagement.

However, this research also highlights areas for growth. The study identified gaps in Challenging the Process, particularly in schools where decision-making autonomy and creative problem-solving were limited. Additionally, some differences in

employee motivation levels across schools were noted, with certain areas requiring stronger efforts to build a shared vision and inspire collective action.

In conclusion, based on Kouzes and Posner's framework, this study reinforces the idea that leadership in education is a dynamic and relational process that requires continual development. The integration of the five practices of exemplary leadership is essential for creating empowering and motivating educational environments. Future research could further explore how these practices can be systematically embedded in school leadership development programs to enhance their impact on both educators and students.

5. Recommendations

1. A training program is developed to prepare leaders in educational institutions on the basis of leadership challenge theory.
2. The ability to inspire a shared vision and empowering staff for leaders should be strengthened.
3. The training program at the Specialized Leadership Training Center under the Ministry of Education in Oman was implemented.

Ethical Considerations

This is a quantitative research study, based on questionnaires to 472 individuals. All factors of protecting participants were taken into consideration and all of the collected information were confidential.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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