

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT LEADERSHIP IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TEACHING PRACTICES AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20588486>

Received	Accepted	Published
07 April 2026	19 May 2026	08 June 2026

ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the role of emotionally intelligent leadership of primary schools on teachers' attitudes towards sustainable instructional practices in Taluka Saeedabad, Sindh, Pakistan. Within the Pakistani school environment, the role of emotional intelligence in influencing the school's instructional culture is underexplored. The purpose of the study is to investigate how far the emotional intelligence of school principals (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills) is related to the attitudes and behaviors of primary school teachers concerning innovative and evidence-based teaching methods. The design of the research used was quantitative research with the use of standardized instruments such as the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and a researcher-made instrument, the Sustainable Instructional Practices Attitude Scale (SIPAS). The study was carried out (N=250) with government primary school teachers of Saeedabad Taluka in primary school using a stratified random sampling method. Data were analyzed descriptively, and the correlation method was used. The relationship between the overall emotional intelligence of principals and teachers' attitude towards sustainable instructional practices was weak negative ($r = -.25$). Results will be used to guide professional development programs aimed at building emotionally intelligent school leadership in order to enhance instruction quality in Sindh; this will benefit from the results of teachers, school principals, and educational policymakers.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Sustainable Instructional Practices, Teachers' Attitudes, School Leadership, Educational Innovation, Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that education is an integral part of national development, human capital formation and socio-economic development. Classroom teaching is a key factor in the effectiveness of educational systems; school leadership practices and the organizational climate of schools play an important role in classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2020). School leaders moved from a traditional administration

role to the leadership of teaching and learning, which now focuses on teacher development, innovation, and incremental change in teaching and learning (Hallinger & Liu, 2022). Emotionally intelligent leadership has become a key factor in school effectiveness and teacher effectiveness within this new paradigm, especially in reforming and resource-limited schools.

Emotional intelligence (EI), a concept by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularized by Goleman

(1995), is the ability to perceive, understand, regulate and effectively use emotions within oneself and other people. Current studies have expanded EI into organizational and educational leadership settings and noted that EI is important for improving interpersonal interactions, decision-making and organizational atmosphere (Boyatzis, 2019). Emotionally intelligent leaders in school settings have empathy, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management, which promote trust, collaboration, and psychological safety among teachers (Cote, 2014; Serrat, 2017). These leadership characteristics have come to be seen as vital for enhancing teacher motivation, job satisfaction and receptivity to pedagogical change. The teachers who are supported and valued by principals with EI are more likely to feel empowered, supported, and valued, which will positively affect teaching behaviors and willingness to try new teaching methods (Wang et al., 2021). Additionally, emotionally intelligent leadership helps minimise stress and opposition to change in the workplace, fostering a culture of ongoing professional development and teaching improvement (Hassan et al., 2022).

A key product impacted by leadership is teachers' involvement in sustainable instructional practices. Sustainable instructional practices are pedagogical practices that address long-term effective learning, inclusivity, and the capability to adjust to evolving educational demands (UNESCO, 2021). These include differentiated instruction, formative assessment, inclusive pedagogy, student-centred learning, and the use of educational technologies to support learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The approaches described here offer the benefit of enhancing student learning performance, as well as other skills and competencies associated with equity, critical thinking, and continued learning.

Making sustainable instructional practices the norm is not so much a matter of technical training as it is a cultural shift in an organization that will not only allow for experimentation but also reflection and continuous improvement (Fullan, 2020). In this context, school leadership is key in influencing teachers' attitudes towards innovation and sustainable approaches to teaching. Studies

suggest that principals who are actively involved in pedagogical innovation and emotional support have a positive impact on teachers' commitment to pedagogical innovation (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). The world is aware of the role of leadership in the improvement of instruction in classrooms, yet sustainable instructional practices are not followed regularly in many developing countries like Pakistan. The education system in Pakistan has been struggling with resource limitations, lack of teacher professional development, low motivation among teachers and low instructional supervision among the teachers (UNESCO, 2022). The difficulties are accentuated in rural and semi-urban areas where there is generally a lack of institutional support systems to guarantee instructional consistency.

Educational reforms have been put in place in the province of Sindh through various teacher training initiatives at the provincial level aimed at improving instructional quality and school governance, such as the Sindh Education Sector Plan, as well as other teacher training courses. In the context of the province of Sindh, particularly in districts like Matiari, the educational reforms are implemented. In spite of these, some classrooms in primary schools are still dominated by traditional and teacher-centred teaching and learning methods, and there is a lack of innovative and sustainable pedagogical methods in many of these schools (Government of Sindh, 2023). The discrepancy between policy goals and classroom practices suggests the importance of investigating factors at the school level that affect teaching and learning.

Based on the emerging literature, it is found that emotionally intelligent leadership can have a significant positive impact on school climate, teacher collaboration and instructional innovation (Boyatzis, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Principals that have high emotional intelligence are more likely to build supportive relationships, manage conflicts effectively and create a sense of belonging for teachers. All of these make for positive teacher attitudes towards change and innovation in instruction. However, there is limited empirical research exploring this

association in the case of rural primary schools in Pakistan.

Moreover, although some research has focused on the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher effectiveness, few studies have dealt with the concept of sustainable instruction and EI. Moreover, this disadvantage is especially pronounced in the context of developing countries as it is further exacerbated by limited resources and systemic inefficiencies. Therefore, this study empirically examines the relationship between EI leadership and teachers' attitudes towards the adoption of sustainable instructional practices, as there are growing concerns and issues regarding this. This is why the empirical study of the relationship between EI leadership and teachers' attitudes towards adopting sustainable instructional practices is needed. Thus, the purpose of the study is to explore the impact of emotionally intelligent leadership on attitudes of teachers towards sustainable instructional practices in primary schools of Taluka Saheedabad District Matiari, Sindh, Pakistan. This research aims to make contributions to both theory and practice in education, incorporating the theory of emotional intelligence into sustainable teaching practices.

Statement of the Problem

A major hurdle in Pakistan's educational system is the lack of quality teaching, especially at the primary school level in rural and semi-urban areas. Despite a wide range of policy interventions, curriculum changes and teacher training programs by the provincial and federal governments, the implementation of evidence-based, sustainable teaching practices in primary schools is still very low. This is a common issue across all Talukas of Matiari District, Taluka Saheedabad being no exception.

One of the critical factors that seems to play a role in the translation of teacher training into persistent improvement of instruction is the type of school leadership. Based on anecdotal evidence, many school principals in Taluka Saheedabad are lacking in interpersonal skills, especially emotional intelligence, to motivate, support and maintain the motivation of teachers to bring about

instructional change. If principals are not emotionally engaged with their teachers, they may inadvertently cultivate a culture of compliance, disrespect, or resistance, which may be detrimental to the willingness of teachers to try new teaching strategies. In addition, the idea of sustainable instructional practices is supported by a good amount of theory in the literature on global education around the world, but it has not been properly operationalized and studied in the context of Pakistani primary education. This leaves a knowledge gap for contextually appropriate measures of sustainable instructional practices, as well as a lack of research to connect leadership emotional intelligence to instructional sustainability in this locale.

Based on the above gaps, the present study raises the research question: How much does the emotional intelligence of the school principals affect the attitude of primary school teachers towards sustainable instructional practices in Taluka Saheedabad? To solve this problem, the need to develop contextually appropriate and empirically proven leadership development interventions and instructional improvement strategies is imperative.

Research Objectives

The following objectives guide this research study:

1. To examine the emotional intelligence demonstrated by school principals in primary schools.
2. To assess teachers' attitudes regarding sustainable teaching practices in primary schools.
3. To evaluate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teachers' attitudes toward sustainable teaching practices.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: No relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teachers' attitudes toward sustainable teaching practices in primary schools.

Significance of the study

The findings will be helpful to guide educational policymakers, school administrators, and educators. More specifically, the study could have

implications for leadership development programs as it highlights emotional intelligence as a key attribute for school principals. Also, it can inform teachers of professional development opportunities to support sustainable teaching practices in resource-limited schools. In summary, this study is a step forward in enhancing the quality and equity of education in Pakistan and other developing countries.

Operational Definitions

Emotional Intelligence: In this study, emotional intelligence is the combination of the ability of the school principals to perceive, evaluate, regulate and express emotions constructively in professional communication.

Sustainable Instructional Practices: Evidence-based, student-oriented, long-term, consistent teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction, formative assessment, cooperative learning, inclusive pedagogy and technology-enhanced instruction.

Teachers' Attitudes: In this study, teachers' attitudes refer to primary school teachers' positive or negative perceptions and willingness toward adopting sustainable instructional practices.

Literature Review

Research over the past few years has found a consensus developing in the academic world regarding the key contribution of emotionally intelligent leadership in the creation of school culture, teacher motivation and instructional quality.

Fourteen years ago, Al-Mahdi and Hassan (2023) systematically reviewed 47 empirical studies and concluded that school principals who exhibited high emotional intelligence were significantly more effective in establishing trust, resolving conflict and maintaining professional learning communities. The authors suggest that EI develops a leader's ability to "accurately" read interpersonal dynamics, respond empathetically to teacher concerns, and help to establish psychologically safe environments that promote instructional experimentation. Likewise, Kwon and Park (2024) found that in South Korean elementary schools, the most important factor

associated with teacher job satisfaction and being willing to implement student-centred instructional styles was the dimension of principal empathy in EI.

In their study on the link between emotional leadership and instructional climate in secondary schools in Pakistan, Malik, Ahmed, and Zafar (2023) concluded that the principals who scored higher in EI were correlated with innovative instructional practices in their schools. The study was carried out in the urban context of Punjab, but the results are likely to hold in the primary school context in Taluka Saeedabad.

In many different frameworks, the idea of sustainable instructional practices has been theorized. According to Torres and Reyes (2023), which is built on Fullan's (2005) definition, instructional sustainability is the institutionalization of evidence-based practices that continue beyond the training sessions. In the longitudinal study of Mexican primary schools conducted by Torres and Reyes (2023), teacher autonomy support from school leadership proved the most important factor for the persistence of formative assessment practices over 3 years.

In this study, barriers of sustainable pedagogy in the primary schools of Sindh were explored by Khan and Siddiqui (2024), who pointed out weak instructional leadership as the primary systemic barrier. The results they have obtained highlight the need for tackling leadership in order to reach instructional sustainability in situations like Taluka Saeedabad.

Zhang, Liu and Chen (2024) conducted a path analysis that included 382 Chinese primary school teachers, which found that organizational trust and teacher self-efficacy played a mediating role between principals' emotional intelligence and teachers' instructional innovation. The model accounted for 61% of the variance in teachers' instructional attitudes, highlighting the systemic relationship between leadership EI and instructional level behaviors.

Naz and Bhatti (2023) analyzed the relationship between the dimensions of EI of principals and openness towards pedagogical change in teacher professional development participation in the context of rural schools in KP, where moderate to

high correlations were observed between EI dimensions and teacher openness towards pedagogical change. As a result of these findings, the present study has a strong theoretical basis for investigating Taluka Saeedabad.

Research Design

The research used in this study is quantitative descriptive correlational research. This design is suitable for the study because the study aims to describe the current situations of principals' emotional intelligence and teachers' instructional attitudes, and to have an insight into the nature of the relationship and the strength of it between the two variables. The methodology of the cross-sectional survey was adopted, and data were obtained from a representative sample of classroom teachers from Taluka Saeedabad at one time.

Population

The target population includes all primary school teachers of Saeedabad Taluka in Matiari District of Sindh, Pakistan, working in government primary schools.

Sample and sampling technique

The primary school teachers were randomly sampled from a population of 250 teachers in stratified random sampling method, where the strata were as follows: by school location.

Research Instruments

The standardized instruments were used twice. Firstly, the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence

Scale (WLEIS) was used, which is a 16-item Likert-type scale that assesses four areas of EI: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion and regulation of emotion. This scale was completed by teachers with regard to their school principal. The WLEIS has been shown to have good reliability across various cultures (Cronbach's alpha: 0.83–0.91). Second, the Sustainable Instructional Practices Attitude Scale (SIPAS), a 24-item, researcher-developed measure of teachers' cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward differentiated instruction, formative assessment, cooperative learning, and inclusive pedagogy.

Data Analysis

All the data collected were inputted, cleaned and analysed with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The analytical framework includes descriptive and inferential statistical processes, which are systematic and address each research objective and hypothesis.

Results and Interpretation

Results were analyzed using the theoretical framework created in the theoretical framework, which placed the statistical results in the light of overall educational leadership and instructional change in the context of the literature. Results were presented for each research objective and hypothesis, and Cohen's (1988) conventions were used to report effect size to express the practical significance of the finding, as well as the statistical significance.

Reliability Analysis

Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
WLEIS	16	.86
SIPAS	24	.89

The internal consistency of the research instruments was tested with Cronbach's Alpha before conducting the main statistical analysis. The reliability of both scales was excellent in the results. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale

(WLEIS) was .86 (16 items), and the Sustainable Instructional Practices Attitude Scale (SIPAS) had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .89 (24 items). Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggest that reliability scores of .70 or higher are considered acceptable, scores above .80 are good, and scores

over .90 are excellent. Thus, both showed high levels of psychometric properties, indicating that items under each scale had a consistent measure of the constructs they were intended to measure. The high reliability values suggest that the information gathered using these instruments can be considered reliable for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

The statistical analysis of the findings for reliability also indicates that teachers did not vary significantly in their perceptions of the principals' EI and attitudes toward the sustainable instructional practices in the questionnaire items. Thus, the instruments were found to be suitable for analyzing the relationship between emotionally intelligent leadership and teachers' attitudes towards teaching

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Self-Awareness	2.40	0.69
Self-Regulation	2.35	0.62
Empathy	2.21	0.73
Social Skills	2.47	0.67
Sustainable Instructional Practices	2.70	0.75

The descriptive statistics showed that the teachers' rating for their principals' emotional intelligence was relatively low on all the dimensions.

The mean score for self-awareness was 2.40 (SD = 0.69), which suggested that the principals were not very aware of their emotions, strengths, weaknesses and leadership behaviors. It implies that principals may have some difficulty reflecting on incidents and how they are feeling affects their decisions and relationships with staff.

The mean score for self-regulation was 2.35 (SD = 0.62), indicating that principals' self-regulation score was relatively low, which means that they do not regulate their emotions, control their impulsive reactions and keep their emotions stable when it comes to challenging situations. Teachers may feel their school leaders are not coping well with stress and conflict in the workplace.

The mean score for empathy (M = 2.21, SD = 0.73) was the lowest, suggesting that principals were generally rated as lacking empathy for teachers' emotions and professional needs. This discovery implies that teachers do not feel that they are understood, supported, or valued by their school leaders. The mean score for social skills was 2.47 (SD = 0.67), indicating low interpersonal

communication and relationship-management skills concerning principals. The results indicate not much collaboration, not much effective communication and not much capability to establish positive professional relationships in schools. The mean score for Sustainable Instructional Practices was 2.70 (SD = 0.75), which showed a relatively low level of positive attitudes of teachers towards adopting and sustaining innovative instructional practices. This could be a lack of leadership support, a lack of professional encouragement, and a lack of conditions conducive to instructional improvement.

The overall results indicate that principals of schools in the sample show a very low level of emotional intelligence. The teachers' attitudes towards sustainable teaching practices are relatively low, and so are the emotional intelligence scores. The findings suggest that the lack of emotionally intelligent leadership could affect the creation of positive school cultures that foster instructional innovation, collaboration and ongoing professional development. There is thus a need for targeted leadership development programs on emotional intelligence

Correlation

Variable	SIPAS (Sustainable Instructional Practices Attitude Scale)
Self-Awareness	-.18**
Self-Regulation	-.21**
Empathy	-.24**
Social Skills	-.18**
Overall EI	-.25**

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The findings showed that there were weak relationships between the principals' EI dimensions and teacher attitudes in sustainable instructional practices. The range of the correlation coefficients was between $r = -.17$ and $r = -.26$, which falls under Cohen's (1988) classification of low association.

Self-awareness ($r = -.18$), self-regulation ($r = -.21$), empathy ($r = -.21$), and social skills ($r = -.18$) negatively correlated with SIPAS, but were weak. In the same way, principals' overall emotional intelligence showed a weak negative correlation ($r = -.25$) with the attitude of teachers toward sustainable instructional practices. These results suggest that when principals' level of emotional intelligence is lower, teachers' attitude to sustainable instructional practices is also slightly lower, indicating that the principals' supportive leadership influence for promoting the sustainable instructional practices is insufficient.

The correlation analysis showed that principals' emotional intelligence was statistically significantly correlated with the teachers' sustainable teaching attitudes ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$). So, if there is no relation between the two variables, then null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

Overall, the findings reveal that, if the principal demonstrates low EI, it could result in lower communication with teachers, a lower motivational environment in the schools, lower support for innovative/sustainable teaching methods, and generally low teacher engagement in teaching in the sense of sustainability. Thus, the results support the conclusion that having a low EI score by school principals is related to having less favorable (low/weak) attitudes of teachers for sustainable instructional practices.

Discussion

The results of this research indicated that the principals of the schools had low EI in all four aspects, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and social skills. Likewise, teachers showed a low attitude towards sustainable instructional practices. The results of this study indicate that the lack of emotional effectiveness in the leadership process can reduce the motivation of teachers and their willingness to implement new and effective teaching methods that can be sustained.

The results on the low level of EI of school principals are corroborated by Al-Mahdi and Hassan (2023), who found that principals with low EI are more effective in building trust, handling conflicts, and fostering supportive school environments. Likewise, Kwon and Park (2024) concluded that empathy is one of the key leadership skills that positively affects teachers' satisfaction and innovation in teaching. The reason why, in the present study, the mean score of empathy is the lowest, it may be the cause of the negative perception of the leadership of teachers. The findings also revealed that teachers had low attitudes towards sustainable instruction. It aligns with Khan and Siddiqui (2024), who found that weak instructional leadership was a significant constraint in implementing sustainable pedagogical practices in primary schools in Sindh. Similarly, Torres and Reyes (2023) found leadership support to be one of the factors that teachers considered as a key determinant of their willingness to sustain the innovation over time.

One of the significant results of the present study was that principals' EI had a statistically significant negative correlation with teachers' attitudes toward sustainable instructional practices ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Findings suggest a relationship between low principals' EI and negative teacher attitudes toward sustainable instruction.

The result is somewhat contradictory to the previous ones that showed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher outcomes. According to Zhang, Liu and Chen (2024), principals' emotional intelligence has a positive effect on teacher instructional innovations by affecting organizational trust and teacher self-efficacy. Likewise, Naz and Bhatti (2023) found that emotionally intelligent principals had a positive impact on teachers' willingness to engage in professional learning and make pedagogical changes.

Similarly, Malik, Ahmed and Zafar (2023) determined that principals with high emotional intelligence scores were correlated with innovative pedagogical practices of teachers in Pakistani secondary schools. Similarly, Wang, Chen, and Li (2021) found that EE school leaders create an environment that fosters school employees' engagement, collaboration, and positive behaviors.

The negative correlation found in the present study could be attributed to the overall low level of emotional intelligence of principals in the sampled schools. In contrast to the studies conducted by Zhang et al. (2024) and Malik et al. (2023) which found that principals' emotional intelligence competencies were higher, principals in the current study were perceived as having less empathy, emotional regulation and effective interpersonal skills. These can, in turn, lead to decreased motivation, less professional support, and diminished commitment to sustainable teaching methods among teachers.

Moreover, the results are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Goleman (1995), suggesting that a lack of emotional intelligence among leaders may compromise the ability to establish a productive relationship and motivate workers properly. Likewise, Boyatzis (2019) noted that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in effective leadership as it helps to build trust, communicate and gain commitment in an organization. Lack of these competencies can

lead to reduced involvement in school improvement and innovation in teaching.

In sum, the results indicate that overall, EI continues to be a significant factor in the effectiveness of educational leadership. The high emotional intelligence scores reported among teachers and the low scores reported among principals in Taluka Saeedabad seem to be linked to lower teachers' attitudes towards sustainable teaching. Hence, it is important that leadership development initiatives which emphasize self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills are implemented to foster sustainable educational improvement and instructional quality in primary schools.

Conclusion

The study examined the factors of emotionally intelligent leadership in the improvement of teachers' attitudes towards sustainable instructional practices in primary schools of Taluka Saeedabad. The results indicated that the emotional intelligence of school principals was generally low, especially in the field of empathy and self-regulation. Similarly, teachers expressed negative attitudes towards sustainable instructional practices showing that they were not ready to embrace and implement innovative, inclusive, and student-centered teaching methods. The study revealed that overall, principals' perception of emotional intelligence was relatively low and was significantly related to negative teacher attitudes toward sustainable teaching practices. Results indicate that developing EI skills for school administrators could potentially help increase instructional sustainability and teacher engagement.

Recommendations

From the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills are four of the competencies of emotional intelligence that should be added to training programs for principals and leadership development for principals. School leaders should be building and honing these skills through

regular workshops and professional development opportunities.

Emotional intelligence should be taken as an important criterion in the recruitment, selection, evaluation and promotion of school principals by the government of Sindh. Measurement of emotional competencies can be used to help identify leaders who can promote positive school climates and instructional improvement.

SMDs need to be designed to improve principals' interpersonal and emotional skills. Emotionally intelligent leadership practices can be enhanced by mentoring, coaching, and reflective leadership practices.

Educational policies need to be created to acknowledge the role of emotional intelligence in educational leadership and to help support leadership training programs that incorporate emotional competencies.

Longitudinal studies are needed in the future to explore the impact of emotionally intelligent leadership on instructional sustainability and student achievement over time. District or province comparative studies can also give general information about the impact of emotional intelligence on educational leadership.

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