Government Secondary School Teachers' Preferred and Perceived Leadership Styles, Professional Commitment, Retention and Job Satisfaction in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: The Path-Goal Theory in Focus

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Abstract: *By using a correlational design, this study examined the relationship among leadership style, teachers' professional commitment, and teacher retention and job satisfaction in Addis Ababa government secondary schools. Data was collected from a random sample of 293 teachers drawn from 11 government secondary schools using three standardised measures after adopting them for use in the present context. The collected data was analysed using t-test, analysis of variance, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results indicated a significant positive correlation with moderate magnitude between job satisfaction on the one hand and professional commitment, leadership style and teacher retention on the other. The findings also showed that (i) teachers' job satisfaction is significantly better under participative leadership than directive leadership; (ii) whereas participative leadership is by far the most preferred style, the leadership style practised, as perceived by most teachers, is directive leadership followed by participative leadership; (iii) participative leadership style, professional commitment, teacher retention, achievement-oriented leadership style, length of teaching service and educational qualification are significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction. Whereas the variables jointly accounted for 53 percent of the variance in teachers' job satisfaction, participative leadership alone accounted for 33.6 percent of the variance in job satisfaction. It may be concluded, based on the findings, that participative leadership is the strongest predictor of teachers' job satisfaction and a leadership style a large majority of teachers prefer. Directions for future research are suggested.*

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Introduction

Quality education requires, among other things, a well-designed curriculum, sufficient resources and effective school heads and teachers. Ethiopian secondary schools, like those elsewhere, play a significant role in carrying out the government's educational objectives. Public schools, being formal organisations and a significant part of the public sector, have a bureaucratic administrative structure with a set of rules and regulations that intend to give students and staff in the schools the necessary opportunities for education and development. These opportunities are typically provided under the direction of the principal.

Numerous administrative challenges within formal organisations arise from the inherent tension between the strategic objectives and demands of the organisation and the personal goals and motivations of mature individuals operating within these structures. As noted by Hoy and Miskel (1996), organisations endeavour to shape and assign individuals into predefined roles to facilitate the achievement of institutional goals. However, individuals concurrently engage in efforts to reinterpret and personalise these roles to better align with their own preferences and values, generating a dynamic interplay that complicates organisational coherence. Elmore (2000) contends that leadership within public schools and school systems frequently fails to reconcile this fundamental tension. This failure is principally attributed to leadership's insufficient capacity to balance organisational imperatives with the diverse and evolving needs of individuals, resulting in an inability to adequately prepare these institutions to meet the escalating demands of higher education. Consequently, such leadership shortcomings impair adaptive responsiveness, hinder effective collaboration, and ultimately undermine institutional performance and progress.

Leadership is defined as a dynamic process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common organisational goal. This contemporary definition, as articulated by Northouse (2018), highlights four fundamental elements: leadership as a process emphasises the relational and interactive nature of leadership rather than as a fixed trait; influence is the core mechanism through which leaders affect followers' motivation and actions; leadership inherently involves groups, signifying the collective nature of organisational work; and leadership purposefully directs collective efforts toward goal attainment. This multidimensional understanding reflects an evolution from traditional authoritarian models toward a more process- and relationship-oriented view that values collaboration, mutual influence, and shared responsibility in achieving organisational objectives. Such a framework is critical when studying leadership in educational settings, where motivating teachers, learners, and guardians collaboratively is essential for successful learning outcomes (Northouse, 2018).

In educational context, leadership is also commonly defined as motivating and directing the skills and efforts of educators, learners, and guardians to accomplish shared learning goals. Effective leadership requires leaders and followers to collaborate in achieving organisational objectives through accurate evaluation, strategic familiarity, and a thorough understanding of the surrounding environment and context (Saleem & Noshaba, 2021).

The patterns of behaviour employed by leaders to influence followers and guide decision-making regarding their group's objectives, strategies, and daily operations are commonly conceptualised as leadership styles. Leadership style refers to the methods by which leaders provide direction, implement plans, and motivate their followers to achieve organisational goals (Northouse, 2021). In hierarchical organisational contexts, the style of leadership combined with the quality of the relationship leaders establish with their subordinates significantly impacts the efficacy and success of teams (Bass & Bass, 2008). These

conceptualisations are foundational within the leadership literature and underscore the critical role that leadership style plays in shaping organisational outcomes.

School leadership in Ethiopia, like other facets of education, is developed around political, religious, and cultural beliefs that are represented by followers' submissive actions and leaders' authoritarian behaviours. Alongside the political establishment, rise to power and educational leadership frequently reflect the governing regime's philosophies rather than the promotion of professionalism (Gurmu, 2020). To mitigate a loss of public confidence and serious consequences for public education, school systems and their leaders should not only redefine their approach to leadership but also comprehend the relationships that exist between teacher satisfaction and leadership practices.

The Path–Goal Theory of leadership, which explains how leaders motivate followers to achieve predetermined objectives, emerged in the early 1970s through seminal works by Evans (1970), House (1971), House and Dessler (1974), and House and Mitchell (1974). However, the development of this theory is rooted in a rich lineage of earlier leadership theories that have progressively shaped the field. The earliest was the Great Man Theory of the 19th century, which posited leadership as an innate quality of exceptional individuals predestined to lead. This notion evolved into the Trait Theory in the early 20th century, identifying specific personality traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, and integrity that distinguished effective leaders. Subsequently, Behavioural Theories shifted focus from inherent traits to observable leader behaviours, differentiating between task-oriented and relationship-oriented styles. By the 1960s, Contingency and Situational Theories introduced the premise that effective leadership hinges on how well a leader's style aligns with particular situational factors. These foundational perspectives culminated in more integrative frameworks like the Path-Goal Theory, which emphasises the role of leader

behaviour in motivating followers contingent upon situational variables to achieve goal attainment (Northouse, 2018; Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). This historical progression underscores the complexity of leadership and the continuous evolution toward theories that accommodate contextual variability and follower motivation.

According to House and Mitchell (1974), motivation is fostered when leaders enhance the quantity and diversity of rewards that subordinates receive through their work. Besides providing direction and guidance, leadership also serves to inspire followers by removing obstacles that impede goal attainment and by increasing the intrinsic satisfaction derived from tasks. Path-goal theory frames motivation through the lens of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), which posits that individuals are motivated when they believe their effort will lead to successful task completion, that successful performance will yield desired outcomes, and that these outcomes hold value. The distinction between the two lies in their focus, expectancy theory explains the psychological mechanism underlying motivation the cognitive evaluation of effort, performance, and rewards while path-goal theory operationalises this mechanism by specifying the behavioural actions leaders undertake to influence motivation.

The foundation of Vroom's expectation theory is the idea that people make deliberate decisions among several options that affect their behaviour. Individuals make these decisions with the intention of maximising their enjoyment and reducing their suffering (Donovan, 2001). According to the expectancy theory, an individual's inclination to act in a particular way is based on how strongly they expect a particular consequence to follow their behaviour and how appealing that outcome is to them (Robbins, 1991). According to Dessler (1991), expectancy theory also contends that a person's drive to work hard is dependent on their expectations of success. The main elements are the connections between individual goals and rewards, performance and rewards, and effort and performance. Thus, the expectation theory relies on an

individual's goal-setting and the relationship between effort, performance, rewards, and goal satisfaction.

House and Mitchell (1974) identified four primary leadership behaviours within the path-goal theory framework: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership. Leaders employ one or more of these approaches contingent upon follower characteristics and situational factors. Path-goal theory is not a fixed leadership style but rather a contingency model guiding leaders to adapt their behaviour to meet follower needs and environmental demands to enhance motivation and goal achievement. Directive leadership involves providing clear expectations and guidance; supportive leadership focuses on attending to followers' well-being and creating a positive climate; participative leadership incorporates follower input into decision-making; and achievement-oriented leadership challenges followers to excel. This flexible approach ensures leaders effectively facilitate follower performance by clarifying paths to goals and removing obstacles.

According to Bunmi (2007), directive leadership involves a leader who gives subordinates task instructions including what is expected of them, how the task is to be done, time for task completion and that the leader sets clear standards of performance, makes rules and regulations clear to subordinates. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2000, cited in Yukl, 2013) define authoritarian leadership in the same way. They contend that in an autocratic leadership style, the leader is the only one with authority to set policies, develop plans, instruct subordinates on what to do and how to accomplish it, grant workers minimal autonomy, and prioritise work over the well-being of their subordinates.

A supportive leader makes work enjoyable, is approachable and personable, treats subordinates with respect and as equals, and is concerned about their well-being. By taking into account their needs, showing concern for their well-being, and fostering a positive work

environment, supportive leaders can foster a positive work environment (Yukl, 2013). According to Cheng (2002), a supportive leadership style is one in which the leader is personable and approachable, pays attention to the welfare and basic needs of subordinates, uses encouraging behavior to create a positive work atmosphere, regards subordinates as equals, and shows them respect for their position.

Participative leadership is a style in which leaders actively involve team members in the decision-making process by soliciting their input, ideas, and opinions, and incorporating these contributions into the final decisions that guide the organisation (Wang et al., 2022a). This approach fosters a cooperative environment where decision-making authority is shared to varying degrees, promoting greater ownership and commitment among followers. Leadership roles in decision-making are crucial, as they shape the strategies and direction of the group, with participative leaders utilizing democratic decision procedures to allow subordinates meaningful influence over outcomes (Yukl, 2013). Participative leadership not only enhances the quality of decisions by leveraging diverse perspectives but also strengthens motivation and engagement by empowering followers to contribute to organisational goals.

Participative Leadership style involves a leader who invites subordinates to share in the decision-making. A participative leader consults with subordinates, seeks their ideas and opinions and integrates their input into group organisational decisions. This style is usually one of the most effective and leads to higher productivity, due to better contributions from the group members and increases group morale (Yukul, 2013).

A leader that challenges subordinates to achieve the best quality of work possible is said to be achievement-oriented. This leader strives for constant growth and sets a high bar for followers to meet. Achievement-oriented leaders not only have high expectations for their followers, but

they also have a strong belief in their followers' ability to set and achieve difficult goals.

Another variable that is a focus of this study is job satisfaction. Although job satisfaction remains an elusive term that has been subject to growing scrutiny and refinement especially since the 1959 study by Herzberg and associates (cited in Herzberg, 2015), the topic of employee job satisfaction is garnering significant interest from both scholars and leaders. Roznowski and Hulin (1992, cited in Hulin & Judge, 200), for example, found that an employee's degree of job satisfaction serves as a reliable indicator of the most pertinent information about them in the organisation.

Several authors (e.g., Evans, 1997; Locke, 1969; Schmidt, 2007; Spector, 1997) have defined job satisfaction in different ways. According to Evans (1997), for example, job satisfaction is a psychological state reflecting the extent to which individuals perceive their job-related needs to be fulfilled. For Schmidt (2007), job satisfaction refers to an individual's understanding of the degree of attractiveness of a job if both positive and negative outcomes are weighed up against each other. Overall, job satisfaction is influenced by context-specific events and conditions, which affect morale and perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

Job satisfaction is a critical dimension of individuals' professional lives and overall productivity within the workplace. It is closely linked to a heightened sense of responsibility and engagement toward achieving comprehensive career goals, thereby contributing positively to organisational effectiveness (Harter et al., 2002). While job satisfaction is a broadly recognised concept affecting various industries, its relevance is particularly pronounced in the teaching profession due to the unique challenges educators face.

Research indicates that teacher job satisfaction is influenced by several context-specific factors such as leadership support, student behaviour, workload, opportunities for professional development, and collegial relationships (OECD, 2018; Wang et al., 2022b). For instance, supportive leadership and positive student discipline consistently correlate with higher levels of teacher satisfaction. Conversely, excessive workloads tend to diminish job satisfaction (OECD, 2018). Besides, recognition and collaborative school culture further enhance teachers' job satisfaction, impacting both their well-being and instructional quality (Diagne, 2023). These factors emphasise the necessity of situating job satisfaction within the specific context of teaching to capture its complexity and influence on educational outcomes.

Professional commitment has emerged as a key psychological construct closely associated with job satisfaction. Teachers who display strong professional commitment tend to experience higher job satisfaction and are more likely to cope positively with workplace challenges (Noreen, 2025). This commitment not only reflects dedication to the teaching profession but also contributes to improved teacher morale and performance.

Teacher retention, or the intention to remain in the profession, is critically tied to both leadership and job satisfaction. Studies indicate that teachers who perceive supportive and participative leadership practices alongside personal job satisfaction manifest higher retention rates (Mohamed, 2025). Retention is integral to educational stability, as high turnover rates can jeopardize school effectiveness and student outcomes.

Demographic factors such as age, gender, educational qualification, and years of experience have been identified as important moderators in the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. For instance, Cumar (2025) reported that demographic characteristics influence how

teachers perceive leadership effectiveness and satisfaction, affecting the degree to which leadership styles impact their job attitudes.

In the Ethiopian context, empirical studies have explored relationships among principals' leadership styles, teachers' job satisfaction, and professional commitment. However, these studies often examine only two or three variables, such as leadership style and job satisfaction (Kebede & Demeke, 2017; Tesfaw, 2014), or leadership style and professional commitment (Tolla, 2015), limiting comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of school leadership and workforce outcomes. Tesfaw (2014) found a statistically significant moderate (positive) relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction in secondary schools. Besides, whereas Kebede and Demeke (2017) demonstrated that leadership style significantly predicts teachers' job satisfaction, Tolla (2015) reported a non-significant influence of leadership style on professional commitment, highlighting inconsistent findings.

Extending beyond Ethiopia, African studies reinforce and expand these findings. For example, research in Somalia revealed that transformational leadership has a strong positive correlation with secondary school teachers' job satisfaction, whereas laissez-faire leadership negatively impacts it (Mohamed, 2025). Similarly, a study in Ghana showed transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction of college staff despite dissatisfaction with their pay and benefits (Agyeman, 2024). Further, Cumar (2025) reported that supportive and directive leadership positively affect academic staff's job satisfaction in higher education in Somaliland. The findings of these regional studies align with those from Ethiopian studies in recognising the importance of transformational and supportive leadership styles but also underscore the detrimental effects of passive leadership, which remain under-explored locally.

A critical review of most local and regional studies indicate that the studies do not simultaneously examine leadership style, professional commitment, staff retention, and job satisfaction within a unified model, which impairs understanding of their interplay. Thus, incorporating these four variables concurrently in one study is essential for a holistic view and to inform targeted interventions for teacher retention and satisfaction. Addis Ababa's diverse educational landscape and its status as an administrative centre make it a critical site for examining leadership impacts on staff outcomes. Addressing these issues has profound implications for educational quality and equity nationally.

Accordingly, this study intended to narrow these gaps by investigating four interrelated variables (i.e., leadership style, professional commitment, staff retention, and job satisfaction) among government secondary school teachers in Addis Ababa. The study sought to address the following research issues:

- Is there statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceived and preferred leadership styles?
- Which perceived leadership style is associated with higher levels of teachers' job satisfaction?
- To what extent do perceived leadership style, professional commitment, and teacher retention predict job satisfaction among government secondary school teachers in Addis Ababa?

Answers to these questions have important implications for policy and practice in the selection and preparation of high school directors. Knowledge of teachers' perceived and preferred leadership styles, for example, can provide input to policy makers and education management professionals. That is, it can provide information on what characteristics/ behaviours to emphasise in the selection and education of high school directors. Besides, knowledge of which leadership style is associated with higher levels of teachers' job satisfaction is useful in the training of

high school directors. Overall, the findings of the present study could provide information on how to make teachers' job satisfaction and professional commitment relatively better by working on high school directors.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is informed by the Path-Goal Leadership Theory, initially conceptualised by Evans (1970) and further developed by House (1971, 1996). This theoretical framework draws on Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), positing that employees' motivation and performance are contingent on their expectations regarding rewards linked to their actions. Path-Goal theory elucidates how leaders enhance follower motivation by clarifying the paths to goal attainment, removing obstacles, and adapting leadership styles to fit situational variables and follower characteristics in order to optimize both performance and job satisfaction (House, 1996).

House's (1996) model identifies four distinct leadership behaviours: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership. Directive leadership involves setting clear standards for tasks and expectations to reduce ambiguity, effectively aiding followers needing structure or guidance. Supportive leadership emphasizes leader concern for follower well-being and job satisfaction, fostering a positive climate particularly under stress or monotonous work. Participative leadership encourages follower involvement in decision-making, fostering ownership and collective responsibility. Achievement-oriented leadership challenges followers with ambitious goals, conveying confidence in their abilities to succeed and promoting continuous development.

Empirical evidence corroborates the application of Path-Goal Theory in educational contexts. Tesfaw (2014) demonstrated that transformational leadership behaviours conceptually overlapping with path-goal styles in

Ethiopian secondary schools significantly increased teachers' job satisfaction by promoting trust, teamwork, and shared goals. Similar findings in broader African and global studies confirm that leaders who flexibly employ these leadership behaviours effectively enhance motivation, satisfaction, and retention (e.g., Mohamed, 2025; Agyeman, 2024).

The Path-Goal Theory offers a comprehensive explanation for how educational leaders can strategically influence teacher motivation and satisfaction by tailoring their leadership approach to context and follower needs. This study employs this framework to analyse leadership behaviours within Addis Ababa's secondary schools, recognising the capital's unique sociocultural and educational landscape.

By integrating theory with empirical insights, this framework guides the investigation of leadership's impact on job satisfaction, professional commitment, and teacher retention, advancing both scholarly understanding and practical leadership development in Ethiopian education.

Conceptual Framework

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyse the key predictors of teachers' job satisfaction within secondary schools in Addis Ababa. The conceptual framework positions path-goal leadership styles including directive, participative, supportive, and achievement-oriented behaviors as critical independent variables. Alongside these leadership styles, professional commitment, teachers' intention to stay in the profession (retention), and demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, and experience) are incorporated as additional predictors. The dependent variable under investigation is teachers' job satisfaction, which serves as a central outcome reflecting educators' motivational and emotional states toward their profession.

Although these variables have been individually studied in educational leadership literature, their integrated examination remains limited, especially within the Ethiopian context. Empirically, path-goal leadership behaviours have consistently been linked to positive job satisfaction outcomes. For example, Tesfaw (2014) demonstrated that transformational leadership behaviors aligned with path-goal leadership enhance teacher job satisfaction. Similarly, studies across African educational settings (Mohamed, 2025; Cumar, 2025) confirm that supportive and achievement-oriented leadership styles are significant motivators contributing to higher job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness.

Existing research highlights the positive effect of adaptive leadership styles on job satisfaction and motivation within educational contexts (Olowoselu, 2019; Pacia & Guevarra, 2023). Professional commitment is a well-established correlate of job satisfaction. Committed teachers are more likely to experience fulfilment and exhibit greater persistence in their roles, reducing turnover intentions (Noreen, 2025). Retention, closely tied to professional commitment, is both an outcome and predictor of job satisfaction, as teachers' satisfaction levels influence their decisions to remain in the profession. Demographic factors further influence these relationships by shaping teachers' perceptions and experiences of leadership and job-related rewards.

Reviewing this constellation of variables within a unified framework offers a more holistic understanding of what drives teacher satisfaction in Ethiopian secondary schools. This integration addresses previously identified gaps where studies have focused narrowly on isolated predictors, thereby limiting theoretical and practical contributions. The conceptual model thus guides an empirical investigation aimed at generating actionable insights for educational leadership development and policy formulation targeted at improving teacher motivation and retention in Addis Ababa.
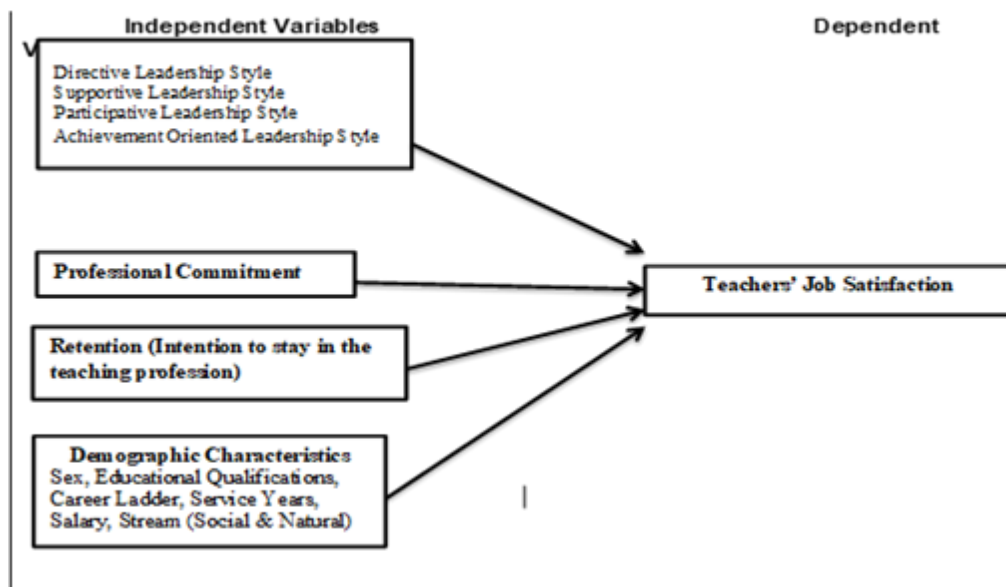
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This section presents an overview of the methods employed including research design, target population and sample, sampling technique, data gathering tools, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational survey design to investigate the relationships between teachers' perceived and preferred leadership styles, professional commitment, job satisfaction, retention

intention, and demographic variables. The correlational design is appropriate as it enables examination of the strength and direction of relationships among these variables without experimental manipulation. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a representative sample, allowing for statistical analysis to identify patterns and associations relevant to teachers' job satisfaction within the educational context.

Measures

This study employed standardized measures to assess leadership styles, professional commitment, retention intention, and job satisfaction. Recognizing the unique linguistic and cultural context of Ethiopia, the instruments were carefully adapted before use.

To ensure contextual appropriateness and clarity, two doctoral candidates from the Department of Educational Planning and Management conducted a thorough face validity assessment. Their review focused on the relevance, clarity, and cultural suitability of each item. For example, items containing technical jargon uncommon in Ethiopian secondary schools or those referencing decision-making processes irrelevant to typical school settings were either revised or discarded. Items that were vague, such as descriptions of leadership behaviours not clearly distinguishable by the target respondents, were rephrased to enhance comprehension and cultural resonance, in line with best practices for instrument adaptation (Kurbi et al., 2023).

Following content validation, these doctoral students translated the instrument into Amharic to improve participant understanding and response accuracy. The translation process followed recommended procedures including forward translation, synthesis of translations, back-translation by independent experts, and review by a panel of bilingual educational researchers. Pilot testing with a small sample of teachers' ensured semantic and conceptual equivalence, confirming that items

accurately captured the intended constructs within the Ethiopian education context (Kurbi et al., 2023).

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section collected demographic data—gender, years of service, educational qualifications, career ladder position, and salary scale—variables demonstrated by prior research to influence teachers' perceptions of leadership and job satisfaction (Cumar, 2025; Noreen, 2025). This justification situates the demographic variables firmly within the literature and emphasises their moderating role.

The second section incorporated the core scales measuring leadership styles specifically directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented behaviors as conceptualised in House's Path-Goal Model (1996) professional commitment, which captures teachers' emotional and normative attachment to their profession, retention intention reflecting teachers' expressed intent to remain in teaching, and job satisfaction, defined as overall evaluative perceptions of their work conditions and roles. Together, this rigorous measure adaptation process and the inclusion of validated scales ensure the reliability and cultural relevance of the data collection instruments used in this study.

Leadership Style: The Path-Goal Leadership Questionnaire (Northouse, 2016) contains 16 items that aim to identify the leadership style exercised by leaders. The scale has four subscales or dimensions each comprising four items that represent the behaviours of the leader. The respondents were asked to provide their response to each item on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four subscales in the present study were 0.83 for Directive leadership, 0.70 for Supportive leadership, 0.85 for Participative leadership, and 0.76 for Achievement-Oriented leadership.

Job satisfaction: The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, 1967) was used as a measure of teachers' job satisfaction. The

MSQ was developed with the purpose of measuring job satisfaction at individual level. This questionnaire originated from the 1957 Work Adjustment Project at the University of Minnesota. MSQ is a self-administered scale consisting of 17 items that use a 5-point rating scale ranging from "5 = Very satisfied" to "1 = Very dissatisfied." Although originally developed in the United States, the MSQ has been widely adapted and validated in diverse cultural contexts, including non-Western settings, with appropriate translation, pilot testing, and validation procedures to ensure cultural relevance and psychometric adequacy (Kurbi et al., 2023). In the present study, an Amharic version of the MSQ was created using rigorous translation and back-translation methods, and the instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, confirming its reliability for assessing job satisfaction among Ethiopian secondary school teachers.

Professional Commitment: The professional commitment of teachers was measured by the Organisational and Professional Commitment Questionnaire (Meyer & Allen, 1991), which utilized a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The professional commitment scale contains 11 items with a Cronbach alpha of .78. The scale has two subscales: affective commitment with five items (Cronbach alpha = .65) and continuance commitment with six items (Cronbach alpha = .75).

Teacher Retention: Teachers' intention to stay in the profession or simply retention was measured using a questionnaire developed by Mugizi, et al., (2019). The authors initially used the questionnaire to investigate leadership style and teacher retention in private primary schools in Uganda. In the present study, we used the questionnaire to assess public secondary school teachers' intention to stay in the profession because we found the items applicable to this group as well. The items were developed using a five-point scale, ranging from a minimum of 1 for the worst-case scenario (strongly disagree) to a

maximum of 5 for the best-case scenario (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.82 in the present study.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprised 7,510 teachers (5,715 male and 1,795 female) serving in government secondary schools in Addis Ababa. Due to logistical constraints and resource considerations, a convenience sampling technique was employed to select three sub-cities out of the total 11. Convenience sampling is a non-probability method whereby participants or units are selected based on accessibility and ease of recruitment rather than random selection (Etikan et al., 2016). This approach was deemed appropriate for preliminary exploration within the complex urban educational setting and allowed efficient data collection while acknowledging inherent limitations in population representativeness.

From the selected three sub-cities, 11 government secondary schools were selected using convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Subsequently, a simple random sample of 315 teachers was selected from these schools to complete the questionnaire. The sample size was calculated to achieve sufficient statistical power for correlational analyses, considering the total population size, anticipated response rate, and practical constraints (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). This sampling strategy balances methodological rigor with field realities, enabling meaningful analysis while transparently addressing selection rationales and potential biases.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample teachers. The sample comprised four times as many (80.5) male teachers as female teachers. Besides, more than two-thirds (69.2%) of the sample served for more than 10 years in teaching. Teachers who are serving with their first degree are larger in number (58.4%) than with their

master's degree (41.6%). Furthermore, in terms of career ladder, a larger number of the sample teachers are lead teachers (45.6%).

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Female	57	19.5
	Male	235	80.5
Length of Service (in Years)	10 or Lower	88	30.8
	More than 10	198	69.2
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	170	58.4
	Master's Degree	121	41.6
Career Ladder	Teacher	59	20.6
	Senior Teacher	97	33.8
	Lead Teacher	131	45.6

Data Analysis

Data were entered, cleaned, and analyzed using SPSS Version 26. To address the research objectives and conceptual framework, multiple statistical techniques were employed. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationships among key continuous variables including perceived and preferred leadership styles, professional commitment, job satisfaction, retention intention, and demographic factors. The Pearson Chi-square test assessed the association between perceived and preferred leadership styles as categorical variables. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined differences in teachers' job satisfaction across the four perceived leadership styles. Finally, multiple linear regression was conducted to evaluate the unique and combined predictive effects of leadership styles,

professional commitment, retention intention, and selected demographic variables (sex, career ladder, educational qualification, and salary scale) on teachers' job satisfaction. These analytic procedures enabled a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships and predictive dynamics underlying teacher satisfaction within the educational context.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers informed the school principals and later on teachers who granted them permission to collect data in their respective schools. To uphold ethical standards, school principals and participating teachers were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; no personal identifiers such as names were collected. The introductory page of the questionnaire provided clear information seeking cooperation and reassuring respondents regarding the secure handling and exclusive use of their data for research purposes. These measures collectively ensured compliance with institutional ethical standards.

Results

In this section, the analyses of the data collected from the sample schools in Addis Ababa is presented. Even though the study planned to collect data from 315 teachers initially, only 293 provided complete and usable data for analysis. Thus, the response rate was 93 percent.

Before data analysis, we checked whether the assumptions of the statistical tests conducted (namely t test, ANOVA and linear regression analysis) (including normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and the absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables) were tenable. Normality was assessed by examining a normal P-P plot, and the data formed a straight line along the diagonal, which shows that the assumption was tenable. Linearity was checked using a scatter plot

between the dependent and independent variables. Homoscedasticity was also checked by a scatter plot of standardised residuals versus standardised predicted values. In both cases, the scatter plots confirmed that the assumptions were tenable. Multicollinearity was further assessed by calculating variance inflation factors (VIFs). The VIF values ranged from 1 to 4.88, all below 10, indicating that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated. The tolerance values ranged from 0.2 to 0.9, which supported the assumption. Moreover, the model summary for the Durbin-Watson test value was 1.8, confirming that the assumptions for conducting multiple regression analysis were all tenable.

Level of Teachers' Job Satisfaction, Professional Commitment and Retention

Table 2 below presents descriptive statistics on teachers' self-reported job satisfaction, professional commitment and intention to stay in the profession. To determine the levels of teachers' job satisfaction, professional commitment and intention to stay in the profession, a one-sample t test with the test value of four (4) was employed. Four on a five-point scale was chosen as the test value because it marks the (minimum) threshold of positive perception about job satisfaction, professional commitment and intention to stay in the profession. In other words, the scales below four (i.e., 1, 2 and 3) represent either negative or neutral responses to questions of job satisfaction, professional commitment and intention to stay in the profession. Although mathematically the midpoint of the scale is 3, this is typically interpreted as a neutral response rather than positive endorsement of the statements.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-test Results for Level of Job Satisfaction, Professional Commitment and Retention (Test value = 4)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	p	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Job satisfaction	293	2.93	.76	-24.08	.001	-1.16	-.99
Professional commitment	293	2.76	.78	-27.16	.001	-1.34	-1.15
Retention	293	2.67	.74	-30.76	.001	-1.41	-1.24

The results indicated that in all three cases, the mean scores for self-reported job satisfaction, professional commitment and intention to stay in the profession are significantly lower than the test value of 4. That is, on a scale of 5, the self-reported mean scores were even less than 3, suggesting that the teachers, on average, had apparently low levels of job satisfaction, professional commitment and intention to stay in the profession.

Is there significant relationship between the perceived and preferred leadership styles?

To answer this question, frequencies of the perceived leadership style are cross-tabulated against those of the preferred leadership style as shown in Table 3 below. The data indicate that whereas the leadership style preferred by the majority is participative leadership style (n=233, 80.1%), the leadership style perceived by the majority to be exercised in their schools is directive (n=112, 38.5%) followed by participative leadership (n=100, 34.4%). Overall, chi-square test of independence showed that there is a statistically significant association between the preferred and perceived leadership styles (χ^2 = 16.78, df = 6, p < .01).

This means that both perceived and preferred leadership styles tend to favor participative leadership style.

Table 3.

Cross-Tabulation of Perceived and Preferred Leadership Styles

Perceived Leadership Style	Preferred Leadership Style			
	Supportive	Participative	Achievement -Oriented	Total
Directive	13	92	7	112
Supportive	7	52	6	65
Participative	7	83	10	100
Achievement-Oriented	3	6	5	14
Total	30	233	28	291

Relationships of the Study Variables

Table 4 presents the intercorrelations of the study variables. Overall, the data show significant positive correlation between the study variables. Magnitude of the relationships ranges from small to large. Whereas the four leadership styles are related to each other with relatively large magnitude (.77 - .84), the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and the four leadership styles (.32 - .37) as well as retention and the four leadership styles (.42 - .44) are of lower magnitude. On the other hand, job satisfaction and the four leadership styles have a significant moderate relationship (.52 - .58). Finally, job satisfaction, teacher retention and professional commitment have significant moderate relationship (.54 - .62).

Table 4.

Intercorrelations of the Study Variables (N = 293)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Job satisfaction	-	.54**	.54**	.56**	.52**	.58**	.56**
2. Teacher retention		-	.62**	.42**	.43**	.44**	.42**
3. Professional commitment			-	.32**	.33**	.37**	.35**
4. Directive leadership				-	.80**	.83**	.84**
5. Supportive leadership					-	.82**	.77**
6. Participative leadership						-	.77**
7. Achievement oriented leadership							-

** p < .01

Under Which Leadership Style is Teachers' Job Satisfaction Significantly Better?

We employed one-way ANOVA to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in teachers' job satisfaction across the four perceived leadership styles. As shown in Table 5 below, the mean score of job satisfaction was the highest for participative leadership style and lowest for directive leadership style. The ANOVA result showed that teachers' job satisfaction is significantly different across the four leadership styles (F = 5.48, p = .001). A follow-up Bonferroni post-hoc comparison indicated that teachers' job satisfaction under participative leadership is significantly higher than teachers' job satisfaction under the directive leadership style. All other pairwise comparisons produced no statistically significant difference in job satisfaction.

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics of Job Satisfaction under the Four Leadership Styles

Leadership Style	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Directive	114	46.70	13.63		
Supportive	65	48.95	12.13		
Participative	100	53.65	11.63	5.48	.001
Achievement	14	50.86	14.11		

Predicting Teachers' Job Satisfaction

The regression analysis examined whether and to what extent the four leadership styles (directive leadership style, supportive leadership style, participative leadership style, and achievement oriented leadership style), teachers' professional commitment, retention and demographic variables such as sex, years of service, educational qualification, and salary scale predict the criterion variable namely job satisfaction using stepwise regression analysis.

The model summary in Table 6 below shows that participative and achievement-oriented leadership styles, professional commitment, teachers' retention, service year in teaching and educational qualification have significant contributions in predicting teachers' job satisfaction, which is the criterion variable.

Table 6.

Regression Analysis of LS, PC, Retention and Demographics on JS

Model				Change Statistics			
(Variable entered)	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	R^2 Change	F Change	(df_1, df_2)	p
1. PLS	.58	.34	.34	.338	148.86	(1, 291)	.001
2. PLS, PC	.68	.46	.46	.124	66.96	(1, 290)	.001
3. PLS, PC, SY	.70	.49	.49	.031	17.66	(1, 289)	.001
4. PLS, PC, SY, TR	.72	.52	.51	.021	12.73	(1, 288)	.001
5. PLS, PC, SY, TR, AOLS	.73	.53	.52	.010	6.31	(1, 287)	.013
6. PLS, PC, SY, TR, AOLS, EQ	.73	.53	.52	.008	4.73	(1, 286)	.031

Note.   PLS= Participative leadership style; PC=Professional commitment, SY=Service year in teaching, TR=Teacher retention, AOLS=Achievement-oriented leadership style, EQ=Educational qualification

The results in Table 6 show that participative leadership style significantly predicts job satisfaction [F (1, 291) = 148.86, p <.001]. The proportion of variance in job satisfaction accounted for by participative leadership style is 34%. Professional commitment is the second powerful predictor of job satisfaction, accounting for 12.4% of the variance in job satisfaction [F (1, 290) =66.96, p<.001]. The findings further indicate that service year in teaching (i.e., length of service in years) enters the model

in the third step being the third significant predictor of job satisfaction [F (1, 289) = 17.96, p < .001]. The proportion of variance accounted for by service year is 3.1%.

Moreover, the stepwise regression analysis indicates that teachers' intention to stay, achievement-oriented leadership style and educational qualification enter the model in the fourth, fifth and sixth steps, accounting for 2.1%, 1% and .8%, respectively of the total variance in teachers' job satisfaction. Overall, the regression analysis results show that the six variables are significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction. They jointly accounted for 53 percent of the variance in job satisfaction. However, the proportion of variance accounted for by participative leadership style is 34 percent, by far the largest contribution.

Examination of the standardized beta coefficients associated with each predictor variable shows the rate of change in the criterion variable (i.e., job satisfaction) for every unit change in the predictor variable. The beta (β) coefficient for participative leadership style is .27; that is, for every unit increase in participative leadership style, there is 0.27 standard deviations change in teachers' job satisfaction. This is followed by professional commitment (β = .25), teachers' intention to stay (β = .19), achievement-oriented leadership style (β = .16) and educational qualification of teachers (β = .09), all with positive coefficients. In contrast, service year in teaching (with β = -.18) indicates that job satisfaction tends to decrease with longer years of experience as a teacher.

Discussion

Among the various factors examined in this study including the four path-goal leadership styles, professional commitment, years of service, teacher retention intention, and educational qualification, the participative leadership style was the strongest predictor of secondary school teachers' job satisfaction. Participative leadership, characterised by involving teachers in decision-making and valuing their contributions, had a significant positive effect, underscoring its critical role in fostering a supportive working environment. This finding aligns with that of Polston-Murdoch's (2013) study, which found path-goal leadership styles as significant predictors of employee satisfaction. The finding is also consistent with that of Malik (2013) that highlighted the impact of managerial leadership behavior on job satisfaction in Pakistan. Furthermore, Chan (2019) reported a positive relationship between participative leadership and employee engagement and job satisfaction, with the effect enhanced when employees experience greater enjoyment at work. Collectively, these consistent findings emphasize the importance of participative leadership in enhancing teachers' motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction, suggesting that educational leaders should prioritize collaborative leadership practices to improve teacher retention and performance.

In particular, scholars in the field (e.g., Drake & Roe, 2003) have shown that participative leadership style is associated with increased teachers' productivity, resulting in improved teacher morale and job satisfaction, promoted trust, increased teamwork, and improved communication. Emphasizing the importance of participative leadership style and its multi-faceted benefits, scholars indicate that decisions that involve teachers have the tendency to offer higher quality, be more accepted by teachers, provide greater satisfaction, and enhance the development of teachers' decision-making skills (Drake & Roe, 2003; Yukl, 2013).

Owing to the fact that job satisfaction is an affective response to an individual's work environment and an individual's general feelings about his/her job or career, it can influence an organization's efficiency. Researchers also showed that job satisfaction can be linked to a number of outcomes including increased productivity, a sense of ownership over one's academic goals, and a boost in self-esteem (Syptak et al., 1999).

Following participative leadership style, teachers' professional commitment emerged as the next strong predictor of job satisfaction in the present study. Given the proportion of variance (12.4%) in job satisfaction that is accounted for by professional commitment and the associated standardized coefficient (β = .25), one can observe how critical professional commitment is in the prediction of job satisfaction. Thus, any effort to improve secondary school teachers' job satisfaction in Addis Ababa needs to focus on ways of improving teachers' professional commitment. Consistent with this finding, previous research (e.g., Basu, 2016) has found a strong positive association between teachers' professional commitment and job satisfaction.

Another important finding of this study showed that teachers' job satisfaction is significantly better under participative leadership style than under directive leadership style. In other words, teachers are better off in terms of their job satisfaction when the principal employs participative leadership style compared to the principal who employs directive leadership style. Therefore, if teachers' job satisfaction is a primary concern in education, then the results suggest that principals need to be ready to accept teachers' participation in the decision-making process, planning the school activities and their implementation, among other things.

In line with the present finding, scholars (e.g., Drake & Roe, 2003) have pointed out that the practice of participative leadership offers a variety of advantages such as better decisions, improved working conditions for teachers and higher teacher satisfaction. Among other things, a

participative leader encourages teachers to do their job with their whole heart, which in turn makes them productive. On the other hand, the present study encourages school principals to avoid being directive as this often discourages teachers' effectiveness and productivity.

What is concerning among the present findings is the mismatch between the leadership style the majority of teachers preferred and the style the majority of teachers perceived as being employed in their schools. That is, for a great majority (80.1 %) of teachers, the preferred leadership style is participative, whereas the perceived leadership style exercised by the school principals according to the majority of participants is directive leadership (38.5%) followed by participative leadership (34.4%). In other words, more than one-half (41.6%) of those who preferred to have participative leadership are led by principals who employ directive leadership. Overall, the mismatch and the other findings together imply that a larger proportion of teachers are likely to have low level of job satisfaction and professional commitment. These, in turn, are associated with turnover intention and many of the teachers may intend to leave the profession eventually.

The findings of this study demonstrate a moderate positive correlation between teachers' job satisfaction, professional commitment, and retention intention, whereby both professional commitment and retention serve as significant predictors of job satisfaction. This aligns with international research such as Worth and Brande (2020), who found a statistically significant relationship between teacher job satisfaction and intention to stay in the profession. Importantly, these results also corroborate findings from local studies (conducted in Ethiopia) that highlight similar associations. For example, Girma et al. (2016) reported a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and professional commitment among primary school teachers in Gombora Woreda. Besides, Eryilmaz's (2025) study underscores the critical role of supportive leadership and conducive working conditions in enhancing teacher job satisfaction and commitment. The findings together suggest

that job satisfaction is an important variable, which is significantly associated with a number of variables pertaining to teachers and their leaders.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that participative leadership style, professional commitment, achievement-oriented leadership style, years of service, teacher retention and academic qualification are potentially significant predictors of public secondary school teachers' job satisfaction. Whereas these variables jointly accounted for about 53 percent of the variance in teachers' job satisfaction, participative leadership style alone accounted for about 34 percent of the total variance in job satisfaction. Thus, participative leadership style is the most important predictor of teachers' job satisfaction. On the other hand, the findings shed light on the preference for participative leadership among a large majority of secondary school teachers. Unfortunately, however, according to the perceptions of the majority of secondary school teachers, directive leadership is the one exercised in most schools followed by participative leadership.

Implications for Future Research

Future research may focus on examining the contextual and personal factors that influence the principals' leadership style choices. For example, an investigation of the variables that could influence principals to adopt a directive leadership rather than a participative leadership would be interesting, when in fact the latter is associated with better productivity and efficiency. The current study identified several variables (e.g., participative leadership, professional commitment, teacher retention, among others) as significant predictors of job satisfaction of public secondary school teachers in Addis Ababa. However, our knowledge is limited regarding whether these relationships are moderated and/or mediated by some of the variables already

investigated in the present study and other variables which we did not examine (e.g., working conditions, teaching load). Future research may thus focus on examining the nature of the relationships of the variables.

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