

Analysis Of Leadership Styles in School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the leadership styles preferred by school teachers, focusing specifically on democratic and authoritarian approaches. A total of 160 teachers from various academic disciplines and experience levels participated in the study. The research aimed to analyze patterns in leadership style preference and examine how these preferences vary across teaching subjects (arts vs. sciences) and Age of teachers (40 yrs below and 40 yrs above).

A quantitative survey design was employed, using a structured questionnaire to assess the leadership orientations of the participants. Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics and inferential tests, were conducted to identify significant differences and trends.

The findings revealed that the democratic leadership style was more commonly preferred among teachers of arts subjects and those with teachers of Age 40 yrs below and 40 yrs above, indicating a tendency toward participatory and student-centred leadership. In contrast, authoritarian leadership styles were more frequently reported by teachers of science and mathematics, particularly among those with less teaching experience. These results suggest that both subject specialization and professional experience influence the leadership styles adopted by teachers.

The study underscores the importance of understanding teacher leadership preferences, as these styles play a crucial role in shaping classroom dynamics, instructional strategies, and student engagement. The findings have implications for teacher education, leadership training, and school leadership development programs.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a critical component of effective teaching, extending beyond school administration to the very heart of the classroom. Teachers, as instructional leaders, exercise influence over their students not only through curriculum delivery but also through the leadership styles they adopt. The way a teacher leads directly affects student motivation, classroom interaction, and the overall learning environment (Goleman, 1995; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Among the various leadership styles, **democratic** and **authoritarian** approaches are widely studied in educational settings. **Democratic leadership**, characterized by collaboration, shared decision-making, and student participation, is often associated with positive classroom climates and increased learner engagement. In contrast, **authoritarian leadership**, marked by strict discipline and control, is linked to rigid structure and teacher-centered instruction (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). While both styles may be effective in different contexts, their suitability often depends on the subject taught, student profile, and teacher's experience.

Previous studies have indicated that **subject specialization** plays a role in leadership preferences. For instance, teachers in the arts and humanities tend to favor a more democratic approach due to the interpretive and discussion-based nature of these subjects, while science and mathematics teachers often adopt more structured,

authoritarian strategies to maintain order and clarity (Sharma, 2014; Borah, 2021)¹. Additionally, **teaching experience** has been found to moderate leadership behaviors, with experienced teachers exhibiting more adaptive and situational leadership tendencies compared to novice teachers (Medley, 1982; Dani, 2014).

Despite growing interest in teacher leadership, limited research has examined how these styles differ across **academic disciplines** and **experience levels** within the school context. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the leadership style preferences of **160 school teachers**, categorized by subject area (arts vs. science) and years of professional experience (below and above 10 years).

The findings from this study are expected to offer meaningful insights for **teacher education programs**, **professional development**, and **school leadership policies**, promoting a more reflective and purposeful application of leadership in the classroom.

Objectives of the Study

1. **To identify** the predominant leadership styles (democratic or authoritarian) among school teachers.
2. **To examine** the variation in leadership style preferences between teachers of **arts subject** and **science subject** teachers
3. **To explore** the influence of **age (40 yrs below & 40 yrs above)** on teachers' leadership style preferences.
4. **To analyze** the combined effect of **subject taught** and **age** on the choice of leadership style among school teachers.
5. **To provide** recommendations for **teacher training** and **professional development** based on insights into teacher leadership behavior.

Null Hypotheses (H₀)

- **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference in the leadership style preferences (democratic or authoritarian) among school teachers in general.
- **H₀₂**: There is **no significant association** between age group and preference for democratic leadership style.
- **H₀₃**: There is **no significant association** between age group and preference for authoritarian leadership style.
- **H₀₄**: There is **no significant association** between subjects handled (Arts or Science) and preference for Democratic leadership style
- **H₀₅**: There is **no significant association** between subjects handled (Arts or Science) and preference for authoritarian leadership style

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership in the educational context has traditionally been associated with school administrators; however, growing attention is being paid to the leadership roles that **teachers themselves** play within the classroom. A teacher's leadership style not only shapes instructional strategies but also influences student behavior, engagement, and learning outcomes (Sergiovanni, 2005)⁶. Among the most prominent frameworks for understanding leadership styles are **democratic** and **authoritarian** approaches, first conceptualized by **Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939)** in their seminal work on leadership behavior.

Democratic Leadership Style

The **democratic leadership style** is characterized by collaboration, participative decision-making, and shared responsibility between the teacher and students. Research suggests that this style fosters a positive classroom climate, encourages student autonomy, and promotes critical thinking (Goleman, 1995³; Borah, 2021¹). Teachers who adopt this style tend to show flexibility, emotional intelligence, and a preference for student-centered learning environments.

According to **Dani (2014)**², democratic leadership among teachers is strongly correlated with higher student

motivation and satisfaction, particularly in subjects that encourage discussion and creativity, such as languages, arts, and social sciences. This leadership style is also more common among experienced teachers who have developed greater confidence and classroom management skills over time.

Authoritarian Leadership Style

In contrast, the **authoritarian leadership style** is defined by centralized control, directive teaching, and a strong emphasis on rules and discipline. While often criticized for suppressing student voice, this style may be effective in situations requiring structure and order, such as classrooms with behavioral challenges or subjects demanding technical precision (e.g., mathematics and science).

Sharma (2014)⁷ found that teachers of science and mathematics were more likely to exhibit authoritarian traits, emphasizing content mastery, strict discipline, and teacher control. However, prolonged use of authoritarian methods may hinder student participation and creativity (Medley, 1982)⁵.

Teachers' Age and Leadership Styles

Shah (2012) conducted a study on secondary school teachers and found a **significant correlation between age and leadership style**. The research concluded that **younger teachers** tend to adopt **authoritarian or task-oriented leadership**, while **older teachers** are more inclined toward **democratic and participative styles**, likely due to accumulated experience and interpersonal maturity.

Pashiardis (2000) compared leadership behaviors across age groups and emphasized that **older educators exhibit more transformational and participative traits**. His study explained that leadership effectiveness improves with age as older teachers become better at conflict resolution, consensus-building, and vision-sharing.

Rout and Behera (2017) examined the influence of **age and gender** on teachers' leadership styles. Their study revealed that **age is a statistically significant factor**, with younger teachers often prioritizing control and structure (authoritarian style), whereas **middle-aged and senior teachers** favored **collaborative and democratic practices** that emphasize team-building and mutual respect.

Kaur (2013) carried out a comparative study which supported the notion that **maturity and emotional stability**, which often increase with age, contribute to a **preference for democratic leadership**. Younger teachers, possibly due to less experience and higher anxiety about performance, were more likely to display **directive or authoritarian leadership traits**.

Sharma (2014) noted in his book that leadership among educators is not only a function of professional training but also **life stage and maturity**. He asserted that **age brings reflective judgment**, making seasoned teachers more inclusive and tolerant in their leadership behavior.

Subject Taught and Leadership Style

The relationship between **subject taught** and **leadership style** has been a growing area of interest. Studies such as those by **Wengtao Zheng (2023)**⁸ highlight that subject matter influences not only teaching strategies but also leadership behaviors. Teachers of **arts subjects** are more likely to favor open-ended discussions and democratic engagement, whereas **science teachers** often lean toward structured, authoritative methods due to the nature of their content.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value in the field of educational leadership and teacher development. By examining the preferred leadership styles of school teachers—specifically democratic and authoritarian approaches—it offers meaningful insights into how teaching practices are shaped by **personal factors** such as **age** and **subject specialization**.

The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how leadership styles influence classroom management, decision-making, and teacher-student interaction. Recognizing that younger teachers and those in the arts tend to prefer democratic leadership highlights the growing emphasis on **collaborative and student-centred teaching approaches**.

The findings have practical implications for **teacher education and professional development**. Leadership training can be customized based on subject area and age group, promoting awareness of effective strategies suitable for different classroom contexts.

Since leadership style directly affects student motivation, discipline, and engagement, this study highlights the need to promote leadership behaviors that foster **positive and inclusive learning environments**.

METHODOLOGY

- This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the associations between Emotional Intelligence components and demographic variables.
- A total of 161 school teachers from various educational institutions participated in the study. The sample was diverse in terms of age (40 & below vs. 41 & above), subject handling teachers (science & arts)
- Instrument: Leadership Preference Scale developed by Dr. L.I. BHUSAN (1995), It consisted of 30 statements divided into two Dimensions (Democratic and Authoritarian Leadership). 16 statements were positive (ie. Democratic Leadership) and 14 statements were negative (ie. Authoritarian Leadership).
- The test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be 0.79.
- The maximum score for each statement is 5 and the minimum score is 1. The statements are scored based on 5-point Likert - type scale. Points are Agreement towards scale on Leadership Preference Scale Agreement points - Strongly Agree, Strongly Disagree, Agree Undecided, Disagree, (Positive statements - 5 4 3 2 1 Negative Statements -1 2 3 1 4 5) For a positive statement which indicated preference for democratic leadership. In case of negative statements which indicated preference for authoritarian leadership, the scoring was reversed.
- Statistical Technique: Paired sample t-test, Chi-Square Tests of Independence were conducted to determine whether there were significant relationships between Leadership styles of teachers with reference to age and subject handling,

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

01. Leadership style preferences (democratic or authoritarian) among school teachers

H₀₁: There is **no significant difference** between the mean scores of Democratic and Authoritarian leadership styles.

Table 1 : Mean scores of Democratic and Authoritarian leadership styles.

Leadership Style	N	Mean	SD	SE
Democratic	162	43.7	11.79	0.926
Authoritarian	162	31.4	9.09	0.714
Mean Difference (D-A)		12.3		

Table 2: Test Results (Paired t-Test)

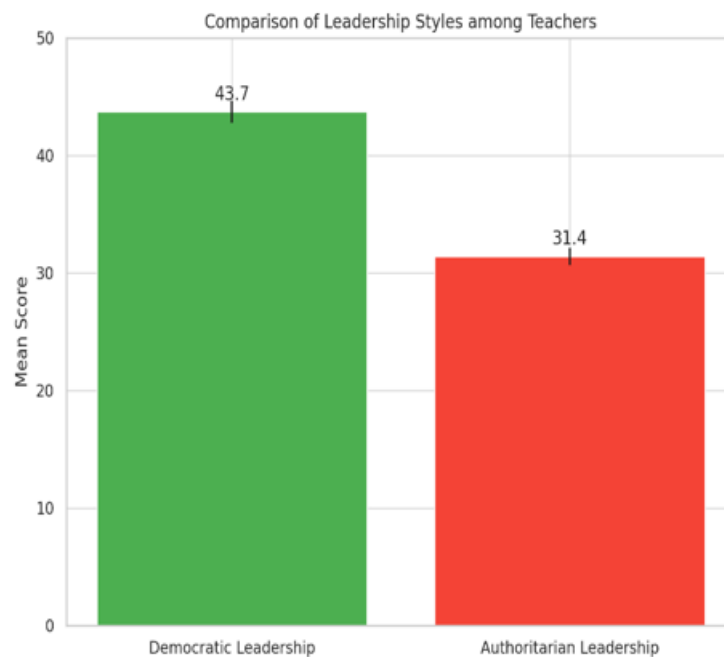
Statistic	Value
t-value	10.51
df	161
p-value	< .001

Interpretation

- The **p-value < .001** is much less than **0.05**, indicating the difference is **statistically significant**.
- The **mean difference of 12.3 points** suggests that teachers score **significantly higher on Democratic Leadership** than on Authoritarian Leadership.
- Therefore, we **reject the null hypothesis**.

Result: The paired-samples t-test shows a **statistically significant difference** between **Democratic** and **Authoritarian** leadership scores among teachers $t(161) = 10.51, p < .001$. Teachers demonstrate a **stronger tendency toward Democratic Leadership** compared to Authoritarian Leadership.

Chart - 01



02. Age group and preference for democratic leadership style.

Ho2: There is **no significant association** between age group of teachers and preference for democratic leadership style.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of Democratic Leadership Preference by Age

Age Range	40 and Below Frequency	% (of 80)	40 and Above Frequency	% (of 81)	Total	% (of 161)
0–19	1	1.25%	0	0.00%	1	0.62%
20–39	26	32.50%	24	29.63%	50	31.06%
40–59	45	56.25%	38	46.91%	83	51.55%

Age Range	40 and Below Frequency	% (of 80)	40 and Above Frequency	% (of 81)	Total	% (of 161)
60–79	8	10.00%	17	20.99%	25	15.53%
Total	80	100%	81	100%	161	100%

Table 4: Chi- Square test (Democratic Leadership Preference by Age)

Statistic	Value
χ^2 Value	72.0
Degrees of Freedom (df)	34
p-value	0.001
Sample Size (N)	161

Interpretation :

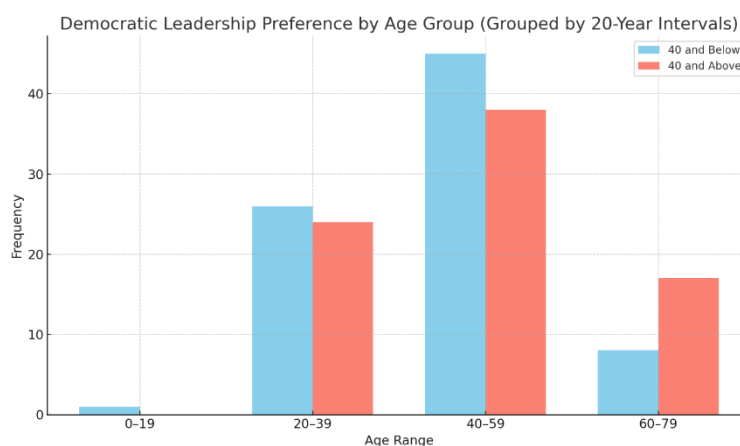
- The **p-value = 0.001**, which is **much less than 0.01**, indicates that the result is **highly statistically significant**.
- Therefore, we **reject the null hypothesis**.

Result :

- There is a **strong and statistically significant association** between **age group** and **preference for democratic leadership**.

This means that **teachers' preference for democratic leadership style varies significantly across different age groups**, possibly due to generational differences in leadership mindset, teaching philosophy, or experience level.

Chart – 02



03. Age group and preference for Authoritarian leadership style.

H₀₃: There is **no significant association** between age group of teachers and preference for Authoritarian leadership style.

Table5:Frequency and percentage distribution of Authoritarian Leadership Preference by Age

Age Range	40 and Below Frequency	% (of 80)	40 and Above Frequency	% (of 81)	Total	% (of 161)
0–19	3	3.75%	0	0.00%	3	1.86%
20–39	58	72.50%	59	72.84%	117	72.67%

Age Range	40 and Below Frequency	% (of 80)	40 and Above Frequency	% (of 81)	Total	% (of 161)
40-59	19	23.75%	22	27.16%	41	25.47%
Total	80	100%	81	100%	161	100%

Table 6: Chi- Square test (Authoritarian Leadership Preference by Age)

Statistic	Value
χ^2 Value	57.7
Degrees of Freedom (df)	32
p-value	0.004
Sample Size (N)	161

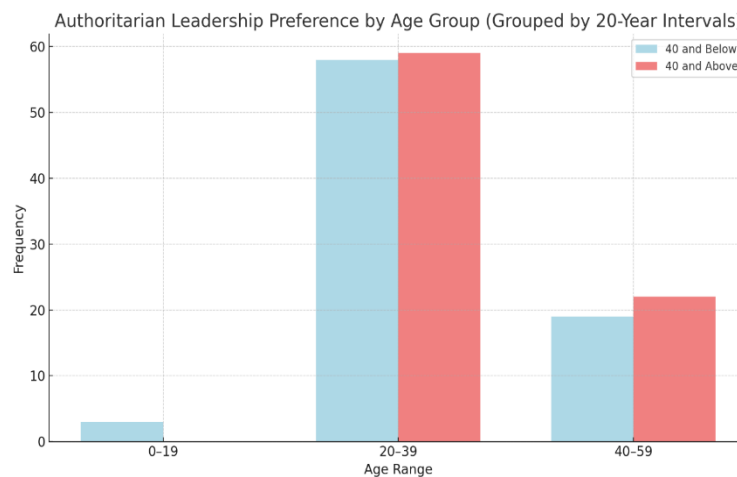
Interpretation :

- The **p-value = 0.004**, which is **much less than 0.01**, indicates that the result is **highly statistically significant**.
- Therefore, we **reject the null hypothesis**.

Result :

There is a **strong and statistically significant association** between **age group** and **preference for authoritarian leadership**.

Chart - 03



04. Subject teachers and preference for democratic leadership style.

H₀₄: There is **no significant association** between subjects handled (Arts or Science) and preference for Democratic leadership style.

Table 7: frequency and percentage distribution of Democratic Leadership Preference based on Subjects Handled (Arts vs. Science)

Subjects Handling Range	Arts Frequency	Arts % (of 78)	Science Frequency	Science % (of 83)	Total Frequency	Total % (of 161)
0–19	6	7.69%	0	0.00%	6	3.73%
20–39	42	53.85%	41	49.40%	83	51.55%
40–59	26	33.33%	36	43.37%	62	38.51%
60–79	4	5.13%	6	7.23%	10	6.21%
Total	78	100%	83	100%	161	100%

Table 8: Chi- Square test (Democratic Leadership Preference by Subjects Handled)

Statistic	Value
χ^2 Value	58.1
Degrees of Freedom (df)	34
p-value	0.006
Sample Size (N)	161

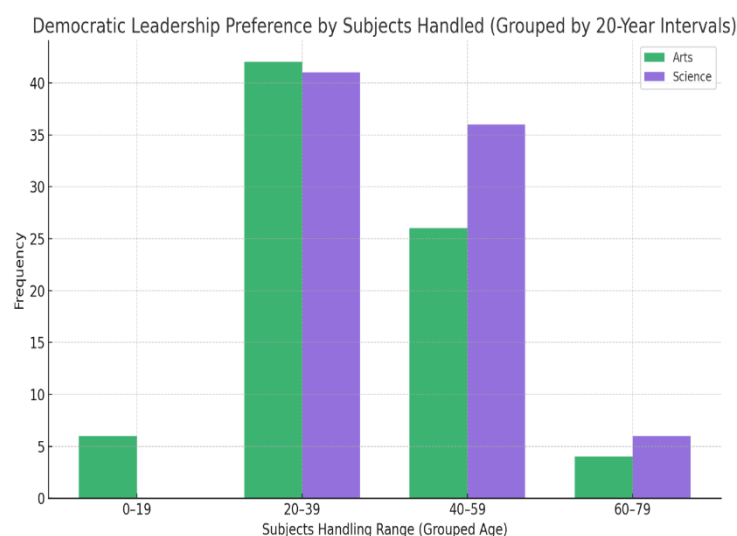
Interpretation

- The **p-value = 0.006**, which is **less than 0.01**, indicates that the result is **statistically significant** at both the 0.05 and 0.01 levels.
- Therefore, we **reject the null hypothesis**.

Result:

There is a **statistically significant association** between the **subject taught (Arts or Science)** and the **preference for democratic leadership style** among teachers.

This suggests that **Arts and Science teachers differ in how they adopt or prefer democratic leadership behaviors** in their teaching or leadership practices.



05. Subject teachers and preference for democratic leadership style.

H₀₅: There is **no significant association** between subjects handled (Arts or Science) and preference for Democratic leadership style.

Table 9: Frequency and percentage distribution of Authoritarian Leadership Preference based on Subjects Handled (Arts vs. Science)

Subjects Handling Range	Arts Frequency	Arts Percentage	Science Frequency	Science Percentage	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
0 – 19	6	7.69%	4	4.82%	10	6.21%
20 – 39	41	52.56%	44	53.01%	85	52.80%
40 – 59	26	33.33%	30	36.14%	56	34.78%
60 – 79	4	5.13%	4	4.82%	8	4.97%
80 – 99	1	1.28%	1	1.20%	2	1.24%
Total	78	100%	83	100%	161	100%

Table 10 : Chi- Square test (Democratic Leadership Preference by Subjects Handled)

Statistic	Value
χ^2	65.3
Degrees of Freedom (df)	32
p-value	< 0.001
Sample Size (N)	161

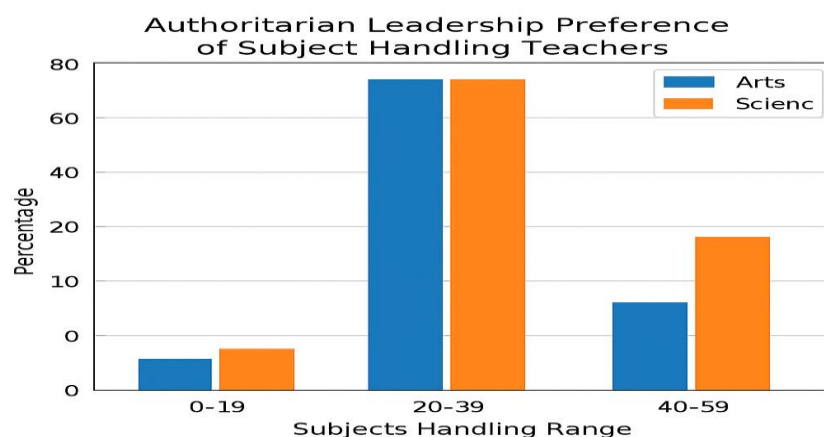
Interpretation

- The chi-square value (65.3) with 32 degrees of freedom is relatively large.
- The p-value is less than 0.001, indicating a **highly significant result**.
- Since $p < 0.05$, you reject the null hypothesis.

Result:

There is a **significant association** between authoritarian leadership style and the subjects handled by teachers. This suggests that the preference or occurrence of authoritarian leadership style **varies significantly** depending on whether a teacher handles Arts or Science subjects.

Chart – 05



CONCLUSION

This study explored the leadership style preferences among school teachers, focusing on democratic and authoritarian orientations and their relationship with **age** and **subject specialization** (Arts or Science). The findings reveal several key insights:

- Teachers **significantly prefer democratic leadership** over authoritarian leadership, as indicated by the paired-samples t-test.
- A **strong and statistically significant association** was found between **age group and preference for both democratic and authoritarian leadership styles**, suggesting that leadership preferences evolve across age cohorts—possibly due to differences in experience, pedagogical values, and generational perspectives.
- Subject specialization also plays a significant role in leadership orientation. **Arts teachers are more inclined toward democratic leadership**, while **Science teachers show a relatively stronger tendency toward authoritarian leadership**. These variations may reflect the inherent nature of the disciplines, classroom demands, or differing instructional norms.

Overall, the study underscores that **both individual (age) and professional (subject) characteristics significantly shape teachers' leadership preferences**, which in turn, influence classroom management, teacher-student relationships, and instructional effectiveness,

Implications of the Study

1. **Curriculum Design for Teacher Education:**
 - Teacher training programs should include **leadership development modules** that address the diverse leadership styles and help teachers adapt their approaches based on context, subject, and student needs.
2. **Professional Development and In-Service Training:**
 - Workshops and continuous professional development should promote **democratic and participatory leadership strategies**, especially for science teachers who may tend toward authoritarian styles due to content rigidity or assessment pressures.
3. **Age-Specific Support and Mentoring:**
 - **Younger teachers** might benefit from mentorship programs that help them refine their leadership approach, while **senior teachers** could be guided to maintain flexibility and inclusiveness in leadership as educational paradigms evolve.
4. **Policy and Administrative Implications:**
 - School leaders and policymakers can use these insights to **assign leadership responsibilities** (e.g., coordinators, department heads) more strategically by aligning them with teachers' natural leadership tendencies.
5. **Enhancing Student Outcomes:**
 - By encouraging more democratic leadership styles across subjects, schools can create more **student-centered, inclusive, and engaging learning environments**, which are linked to better academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

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