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Leadership for Trust and Care: Building Sustainable Learning Cultures in Education Settings

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ABSTRACT

Present study explore leadership of trust and care as the basis of the relationship on the development of sustainable learning cultures within educational context. The study took a qualitative research design, which was directed by an interpretive approach. The data was gathered using semi-structured interviews with teachers and educational leaders of chosen education facilities. Thematic analysis was also used to determine patterns that kept on reoccurring in respect to leadership practices, relational dynamics, and sustainability. The results indicate that trust-based and care-oriented leadership with its features of fairness, transparency, empathy, emotional support, and consistency is in the middle stage of positive professional relations, collaboration, and structural stability of the institution in the long term. The leadership based on trust and care provided psychologically safe conditions that promoted collaborative learning and long-term devotion among teachers. Such leadership practices were reasoned as fundamental to strong and robust learning cultures even in the presence of contextual challenges. The research study provides qualitative and situation-specific information on the ethical and relationship aspects of educational leadership that emphasize trust and care as the factors that promote sustainable cultures of learning.

Keywords: Leadership for trust; Care-based leadership; Sustainable learning culture; Educational leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has also been clearly defined as a relationship and ethical practice and not as a managerial or technical activity (Ballangrud, et al., 2022). The changing issues in contemporary education, including the depletion of institutional trust, burnout among teachers, inequity, and the sustainability issues have changed the focus towards those leadership styles, which focus on building trust, care, and moral accountability (Banwo, et al., 2022). In this context, trust and care leadership has turned out to be an essential pillar towards sustainable learning cultures in learning institutions (Khoso, et al., 2024; Sultana & Imran, 2024; Ahmad, Bibi & Imran, 2023). The importance of trust as an element of effective organizations is a well-known concept in education. It determines the motivation of teachers, collaboration, professional commitment, and change openness (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Once there is a trust between the leaders, the teachers and the learners, education institutions will be in a better position to embrace positive relationships, shared responsibility and continuous improvement. On the other hand, when trust is low, it usually leads to disintegrating school cultures, resistance to change, and low professional morale (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Educational leadership thus decisively contributes to the development of trust in terms of fairness, transparency, consistency, and ethical behavior (Sanjani, 2024).

Among the things, which are closely related to trust, is the notion of care in leadership (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024; Khoso, et al., 2024). The care-oriented leadership focuses on empathy, respect, emotional support and responsiveness to teacher and learner needs. Noddings (2013) contends that care is a moral premise of education because learning is very relational and has to rely on safe, conducive conditions (Ahmed, Ahmed & Buriro, 2023). Caring leaders recognize both emotional and professional facts of teachers and students, thus reinforcing the relational and institutional connection. Care-based leadership in education has been linked to an improvement in teacher wellbeing, student interest, and inclusive school cultures (Olmo, et al., 2024; Oplatka, 2017). It is especially significant that trust and care should be incorporated into the leadership to create sustainable learning cultures. The traits of sustainable learning cultures include long term professional development, common values, ethical behaviors and ability to survive change (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). These cultures are not only based on policies and structures but on relations, moral commitment and shared responsibility. Trust and care leadership helps in sustainability by enabling a culture where the teachers feel important, learners feel secure and the institutions continue even after the leadership has ended (Fullan, 2011).

Trust and care leadership is even more important in a variety of and commonly resource-limited educational environments, especially in developing ones (Puyo, 2022). Issues associated with workload, accountability demands, and social inequities are common challenges in educational institutions that are capable of

undermining trust and eroding the learning cultures. Foresight-based leadership approaches leadership based on trust and care provide a human-centered solution to the above challenges, facilitating ethical professionalism, inclusion, and institutional sustainability (Shah, et al., 2025; Rehan, et al., 2024; Ahmad, et al., 2024; Imran, et al., 2023). In spite of the increasing academic focus on trust-based and care-oriented leadership, the current studies demonstrate that there are many gaps in the research. To begin with, a great part of the literature on trust in educational leadership is devoted to the results of trust (the commitment of a teacher or academic achievements), instead of on how leaders proactively foster trust by means of care-based practices in daily educational situations (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015). Trust and care tend to be considered as distinct constructs, and minimal efforts have been made to integrate them into an organization of leadership (Hamid, 2025).

Second, although care ethics has been widely scholarly debated in the context of education, there is a lack of empirical research on care as a leadership practice with respect to organizational culture and sustainability ((Mohammad, et al., 2024; Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024; Oplatka, 2017). Numerous researches highlight the instructional or transformational leadership models leaving aside the moral and relational aspects which contribute to the learning cultures in the long run. Third, sustainable learning culture studies have been more inclined on policy reformations, leadership development or communities of practice (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Fullan, 2011). Empirical data that associates leadership in the name of trust and care with the creation and maintenance of learning cultures is limited particularly in the non-western and developing education systems (Hamid & Abbas, 2025).

Lastly, a significant gap in the body of qualitative and context-relevant research that examines the lived experiences of educators and other leaders concerning trust, care, and sustainability in educational institutions is apparent. Lack of such insights makes leadership theories be abstract and unrelated to practice. Based on these gaps, this research paper investigates leadership as a source of trust and care as a relational and moral base to achieve sustainable learning cultures in educational institutions. Through the investigation of the experiences of educators and leaders, the study aims to add contextually-based evidence, which advances leadership theory, informs practice, and contributes to long-term sustainability of education.

Research Objectives

1. To understand how educational leaders understand and implement leadership conceptualization and practice in the context of trust and care in their education environments.
2. To investigate how trust- and care-based leadership contributes to the development of sustainable learning cultures among teachers and learners.
3. To examine the perceived effects of leadership on trust and care to professional relationship, collaboration and long-term sustainability of the institutions in terms of education.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception and experience of educational leaders and teachers of

- leadership to bring trust and care in their education environment?
2. How does leadership based on trust and care help in establishing sustainable learning cultures in institutions of learning?
 3. What is the impact of leadership based on trust and care on professional relationships, collaboration and institutional sustainability in the long run?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership and the Changing Nature of Educational Organizations

The role of educational leadership has changed drastically following the alterations of social, organizational, and moral demands on education systems. Models of traditional leadership that focused on hierarchy, control and efficiency have been on the receiving end due to their failure to provide solutions to problems like diminishing trust, teacher burnout, inequity and unsustainable school cultures (Azhar & Imran, 2024; Fullan, 2011). Recent research in leadership emphasizes the significance of relational, moral, and humanistic orientations to leadership that consider education an enterprise that is moral and social and not just technical (Sergiovanni, 2007). The emergence of leadership of trust and care as a critical prism in the context of establishing the role of leaders in relationships, organizational culture, and long-term sustainability has taken place within this shift. According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025) trust and care are not additive leadership qualities; instead, they are core factors that influence the manner in which learning institutions operate, learn and change as time goes by (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Trust in Educational Leadership

The importance of trust is quite accepted as one of the key elements of successful educational leadership and school enhancement (Hafeez, Iqbal, & Imran, 2021). According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), the concept of relational trust in schools is based on respect, competency, personal respect, and integrity. Trust between school leaders, teachers, students and parents will bring about a situation of collaboration, risk taking and constant learning (Imran, Zaidi, & Khanzada, 2023). Conversely, when there is low trust, resistance, isolation and fragmented learning cultures are likely to occur. Empirical literature has indicated that trust in educational institutions majorly depends on leadership practices. Managers who are open in communication, make equitable judgments, and are also consistent are more inclined to bring about trustfulness among staff members (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015). Leadership based on trust has been associated with greater levels of teacher commitment, professional cooperation and innovation openness (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Nevertheless, much of the current literature does not focus much on trust as a relational process that is developed in response to leadership practices but as an outcome variable (Oad, et al., 2024; Imran & Akhtar, 2023). The literature on the process by which trust is deliberately established and maintained by leaders in daily education situations, especially in resource strained and diverse settings, is still limited in terms of qualitative understanding.

Care as a Moral Foundation of Educational Leadership

Care has been traditionally considered one of the ethical principles of

education. The ethics of care as developed by Noddings (2013) focuses on responsiveness in the relationships, empathy, and responsiveness to the needs of others. In this view, educational leadership is moral in nature given that leaders have the role of providing settings where people feel appreciated, nurtured and honored (Phulpoto, Oad, & Imran, 2024; Oad, Zaidi, & Phulpoto, 2023). Care-oriented leadership is the consideration of emotional aspects of teaching and learning, the concern of teacher wellbeing, and the creation of inclusive and safe education environments (Oplatka, 2017). Care-based leadership in education was linked to desirable teacher-leader interactions, student engagement, and inclusive school cultures (Louis et al., 2016). Care has been put aside in leadership research though philosophically, it is one of the prominent factors in leadership studies, though research has favored instructional effectiveness and accountability outcomes. The empirical research on care as a strategic leadership behavior with particular reference to the trust and sustainability is still scarce. This is especially an issue in systems of schools with heavy workload, policy stress and emotional demands.

Leadership for Trust and Care: A Relational Perspective

The relationship between trust and care is a strong one in leadership. Care-based leadership offers the relationship conditions to build trust as well as trust allows care to be practiced in an authentic and effective manner (Noddings, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Relational bonds in educational institutions are likely to be enhanced as leaders who care and have a bond with others tend to build trust by listening, empathizing, and providing support (Oad, et al., 2024; Hussain, et al., 2023). According to the relational theories of leadership, leadership power occurs due to relationship as opposed to position of authority (Uhl-Bien, 2006). In this sense, trust and care leadership is practiced in everyday communication, dialogue and making ethical decisions. This leadership promotes collective responsibility, shared meaning and psychological safety, which are important aspects of sustainable learning cultures. Nevertheless, leadership frameworks where trust and care are the central variables are not well-researched in the academic literature of educational leadership (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024). The majority of the research considers these concepts in isolation and does not provide insight into the overall ways in which they lead to sustainability of the organization over a long period of time.

Sustainable Learning Cultures in Education

Sustainable learning cultures are the type of educational cultures that help individuals to maintain ongoing learning, professional development, common values and extended enhancement (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Sustainability includes not only environmental, but also social and institutional aspects of education, e.g., the retention of teachers, the ethical professionalism, and resilience in the changing environment. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), sustainable leadership is morally founded and it gives emphasis on responsibility towards the learners, educators and future generations. Also, in resemblance, Fullan (2011) emphasizes that the key to sustainable change in education relies on trust and capacity building and relational coherence as opposed to the short-term performance demands. Trust and care leadership is important in maintenance of learning cultures in that it

develops an environment where teachers are psychologically safe to collaborate, innovate and reflect. When trust and care are incorporated in the leadership practices, the institutions can be better placed to maintain improvement efforts in the long run.

Leadership, Trust, Care, and Professional Relationships

Studies have always shown that professional relationship and cooperation in schools are shaped by leadership practices (Imran, et al., 2023). The leadership founded on trust boosts collegiality, decreases conflict, and promotes professional learning communities (Louis et al., 2016). Care-oriented leadership also enhances these relationships recognizing emotional labor of teachers, as well as their professional difficulties. Low-trust cultures also reduce the chances of teachers collaboratively learning or making pedagogical risk, which diminishes the sustainability of learning cultures (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). On the other hand, a leadership based on trust and care promotes ethical professionalism and shared responsibility that leads to stability in the institution in the long run. Though this evidences there is little qualitative research carried on the effect of educators on leadership in the name of trust and care how the leadership can influence sustainable learning cultures in practice, especially in non-Western situations (Oad, et al., 2024; Imran & Akhtar, 2023). The literature reviewed focuses on the essence of trust and care in educational leadership and their significance towards sustainable learning cultures. However, several gaps remain. To begin with first, both trust and care are mostly researched separately, with very little research finding its way to form a cohesive leadership model (Khan, Hussain & Ahmad, 2023). Second, there is a paucity of empirical studies that investigate leadership that promotes trust and care, especially the qualitative research that reflects lived experiences in various educational institutions (Imran, Sultana, & Ahmed, 2023). Third, sustainability is often talked about at the policy or organizational level, and little is given to relational leadership processes that perpetuate learning cultures through the years (Ahmed, Ahmed & Buriro, 2023). The current research plans to fill these gaps by studying leadership as a source of trust and care as a relational and moral basis of developing sustainable learning cultures in educational environments. The study adds contextually grounded knowledge to the leadership theory through the foregrounding of the experiences of educators and leaders, and of importance to inform sustainable educational practice.

METHODOLOGY

The present study utilized the qualitative research methodology to explore the concept of leadership as a source of trust and care and how it influences the development of sustainable learning cultures in learning communities. The choice of qualitative design was supported by the fact that trust, care and sustainability are relational and context specific phenomena that can be better comprehended based on the lived experiences and perceptions of teaching leaders and educators. An interpretative approach informed the research, and it gave the opportunity to conduct a detailed analysis of the process of implementing and experiencing the

leadership practices based on trust and care in educational institutions. The study was undertaken in some education settings within an urban setting of Pakistan. The study sample included education administrators, principals and academic heads, and educators who teaches at the various education levels. The choice of the participants was based on a purposive sampling strategy where the participants were required to have a good amount of professional experience and first-hand experience in dealing with leadership practices regarding trust, care, and organizational culture. They had to be at least three years of teaching or leadership experience. The final sample was balanced in terms of leaders and teachers, and this was deemed to be sufficient to bring about data saturation.

Semi-structured interviews were the method of data collection that allowed the respondents to convey their stories in details and at the same time provide the researcher with the alignments with the research objectives. The interview questions centered around the personal perception of leadership as a factor that builds trust and care, leadership engagements that build relational trust and how this leadership leads to sustainability of learning cultures. The interviews would be done either face to face or online depending with the availability of participants, and the duration of the interviews would be about 30 to 45-minutes. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed word-to-word with the informed consent of the participants. Thematic analysis was done as a systematic analysis of data in accordance with the systematic approach of Braun and Clarke. It included orienting on the data, creating primary codes, detecting and honing themes, and discerning patterns in regard to trust, care, and sustainability. Member checking was applied to make the research trustworthy, whereas the reflexive journaling was employed to reduce the bias of the researcher. Ethical consent was also taken before any data was collected and confidence, anonymity and voluntary participation were upheld to the latter in the study.

Table 1: Alignment of Research Objectives, Themes, and Interview Questions

Research Objectives	Theme Related to Objective	Sample Interview Questions
To understand how educational leaders understand and implement leadership conceptualization and practice in the context of trust and care in their education environments.	Conceptualization of Trust- and Care-Based Leadership	1.What do you consider leadership in terms of trust and care in your institution? 2.What are some of the examples of leadership practice that foster trust and care within the staff and learners?
To investigate how trust- and care-based leadership contributes to the development of sustainable learning cultures among teachers and learners.	Trust, Care, and Sustainable Learning Culture	3.How does a trust and care leadership approach affect the learning culture of your institution? 4. What are the roles of trust and care in the long-term amelioration and

Research Objectives	Theme Related to Objective	Sample Interview Questions
		sustainability of teaching and learning practices?
To examine the perceived effects of leadership on trust and care to professional relationship, collaboration and long-term sustainability of the institutions in terms of education.	Professional Relationships, Collaboration, and Sustainability	5. What is the impact of the leadership based on trust and care on the relationship and cooperation within the teaching fraternity and staff? 6. How does this type of leadership affect the commitment of the staff, their wellbeing and the sustainability of the institution in the long term?

Table 1 shows the correspondence of research objectives, thematic focus, and interview questions, which creates the consistency between the objectives of the study and the process of data collection.

Findings

The thematic analysis of the interview data led to the identification of five themes that relate to one another to reveal how the leadership of trust and care can be applied in developing sustainable learning cultures within the education context. These themes denote experiences and perceptions of the participants towards leadership practices, relationships and long-term outcomes of culture.

Theme 1: Leadership for Trust as Fairness, Transparency, and Consistency

Trust was always reported by participants as a result of being achieved through fair, transparent, and consistent behavior of the leaders. The leaders who treated everyone equally, communicated freely and were consistent in making decisions were seen as trustworthy. Trust was never linked with authority or status but good morals in ordinary leadership activities.

A school leader stated:

“When the teachers are left with no personal decisions to make but rather fair decisions, trust is established. They will still agree even when they do not want to agree as long as the process is transparent.” (Leader L2)

The teacher underscored the fact that fear and uncertainty were minimized with predictable and honest leadership.:

“Where there is a clear honesty of the head, this makes us feel safe. We are not concerned with hidden agendas.” (Teacher T4)

This theme emphasizes the theme of trust as a relationship consequence based on ethical leadership action and not on official policies.

Theme 2: Leadership for Care as Emotional Support and Human Connection

The nurturing aspect was one of the key aspects of leadership, especially via emotional support, empathy, and the acknowledgment of professional and personal

issues of teachers. Participants defined caring leadership as leadership that listens, understands and responds to human needs as opposed to the one that only focuses on people performance.

One teacher shared:

“Our leader realizes that teachers are human beings to start with. When one is in need, she listens rather than blaming.”(Teacher T1)

Care was also considered as a moral duty by leaders:

“When teachers feel appreciated and taken care of, then they automatically offer their best to the students.”(Leader L3)

Theme 2 shows that care-based leadership builds relational connections, and provides working conditions that are emotionally safe.

Theme 3: Trust and Care as Foundations for Collaboration and Professional Relationships

The respondents had a strong association between trust and care with enhanced professional relations and cooperation among the employees. It promoted open communication, collaboration and collective accountability to teaching and learning through a leadership that was based on trust and care.

A teacher explained:

“This is due to the trust we have and as such we freely express our ideas and problems. Fear of being judged is non-existent..”(Teacher T6)

Leaders emphasized that collaborative cultures were built slowly by using trust- and care-based practices:

“Teamwork is not imposed it is an atmosphere that ensues when one feels secure and honored..”(Leader L1)

This theme shows how the practice of leadership based on trust and care fosters relational conditions which are needed in collective learning.

Theme 4: Leadership for Trust and Care in Shaping Sustainable Learning Cultures

The trust and care leadership were seen by the participants as necessary in the long-term maintenance of positive learning cultures. Sustainable learning cultures were defined as situations where teachers are committed, learning practices do not stop despite difficulties and institutional values are held firm.

A leader reflected:

“The systems are changing, policies are changing but the school remains stable because of trust and care.”(Leader L4)

The sustainability was associated by teachers with shorter burnout and longer-term involvement:

“Since we feel supported, we do not consider quitting. We grow with the school.”(Teacher T7)

This theme points out sustainability as a relational and cultural product and not a quick-fix project.

Theme 5: Challenges to Practicing Trust- and Care-Based Leadership

Although they were aware of its significance, the participants noted some difficulty in exercising leadership to be trusted and care. These were workload pressures, accountability pressures, resource constraints and external demands that

at times interfered with care based values.

One leader noted:

“Outside pressures can sometimes cause us to not be caring, though we do not trust this..” (Leader L2)

The issue of care and professional boundaries was also a concern of teachers:

“We need to take care, however, leaders should be strict to create balance.” (Teacher T8)

This theme highlights the fact that trust and care leadership must be ethically judged and balanced under the complicated educational realities.

In general, the results show that leadership of trust and care is a relational and ethical base of developing learning cultures on a sustainable basis. Fairness and transparency help to build trust and empathy and emotional support are used to carry out care. These leadership practices when combined enhance good professional relationships, encourage collaboration and ensure favorable learning cultures in spite of the situation on the ground.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed at investigating the role played by a leadership that is based on trust and care in the establishment of sustainable learning cultures in learning institutions (Hafeez, Iqbal, & Imran, 2021). The results are a solid qualitative source of evidence that trust- and care-based leadership is not a marginal leadership strategy but a core relational and moral base that determines professional relationships, collaboration and long-term sustainability of institutions. The study places leadership in daily life of interactions and emotion-based realities of educational work and so expands the literature on leadership that has tended to focus on technical or instructional aspects rather than relational aspects of leadership.

The results show that the trust is mostly developed due to the fairness, transparency and consistency of decision-making by the leaders (Ahmed, Ahmed & Buriro, 2023). This is very similar to the research done by Bryk and Schneider (2002); they also define integrity, respect, and competence as the most important aspects of relational trust in the school. The focus on transparent processes by the participants helps to prove the statement by Tschannen-Moran (2014) but states that trust is established when leaders are reliable and transparent during the long-term period. The research confirms the available literature, that trust is not created through the power of a leader but rather created when a leader adopts ethical and predictable leadership behaviors (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015).

Care became a very important leadership aspect which was so poignant and especially in terms of emotional support, empathy and an appreciation of to teachers as persons. This conclusion is a solid justification of Noddings (2013) ethics of care that makes care a moral basis of education and leadership. The experience provided by the participants indicates that care-oriented leadership contributes to emotional safety and professional dignity that are vital to successful teaching and learning. In line with Louis et al. (2016), the research shows that caring leadership enhances

teacherleader relationships and provides contribution to favorable climates within a company (Oad, et al., 2024; Hussain, et al., 2023). Notably, the results indicate the interrelationship between trust and care in leadership practice. Care-based leadership generated relational spaces where trust would be built whereas trust was the process through which care would be seen as genuine and not strategic. This guiding theory in relational leadership that is based on leadership as process that arises as a result of relationship and not job position (Uhl-Bien, 2006). The importance of the study to the literature is that there is an empirical establishment of how trust and care work synergistically and not independently as a construct of leadership.

These results also indicate that trust and care leadership makes a significant contribution to collaboration and professional relationships (Shah, et al., 2025; Rehan, et al., 2024; Ahmad, et al., 2024; Imran, et al., 2023). Respondents reported more openness, mutual learning, and minimization of judgement anxiety that conforms to the existing studies on the associations between trust-based leadership and professional learning communities and collaborative cultures (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Louis et al., 2016). Trust- and care-based leadership can provide educators with a chance to practice reflection and problem-solving as a collective, which are the main components of sustainable learning cultures by promoting psychological safety.

As a long-term result of trust and care leadership, sustainability appeared. The respondents have linked sustainable learning cultures to staff retention, institutional stability and preservation of values despite external forces (Imran, et al., 2023). This observation is highly aligned with the sustainable leadership theory that says that long-term educational progression will be based on the moral purpose, relational trust as well as capacity building instead of immediate performance benefits (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Fullan, 2011). This theory is also further expanded with empirical richness in the present study, which reveals the way sustainability is being practiced on the relational level through everyday leadership practices. Accountability pressures, workload demands, and balancing care and authority, which are identified by the participants, are the challenges that are mentioned in previous studies (Oplatka, 2017). These issues point to the fact that trust and care leadership involves the continuous moral evaluation and reconciliation and not mere care behavior adoption (Ahmad, et al., 2024; Imran, et al., 2023). The results thus support the perspective that trust- and care-based leadership is a sensitive and varied practice with special concerns in education systems that are characterized by limited resources and external accountability pressures.

On the whole, the given study contributes to the literature by providing qualitative and contextually-related information about leadership as a tool of creating sustainable learning cultures based on trust and care (Shah, et al., 2025). It is one that answers the research calls that have pulled out of the abstract leadership models to focus on the relational and moral aspects of leadership in practice. By foregrounding the lived experience of educators, the study adds to the further insight

of the ways in which trust and care are able to maintain the learning cultures and foster the development of education in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study explored the idea of leadership towards trust and care as a guiding principle towards establishing sustainable learning cultures within learning environments. The results show that trust-based and care-based leadership is significant in influencing positive working relationships and collaborative learning, as well as retaining learning cultures in the long term. Trust was identified to be developed by being fair, transparent, and consistent in leadership practice, whereas care became manifested in being empathetic, supportive, and understanding educators as individuals. Combined, these elements of leadership provided the relational circumstances that allowed educators to interact freely, work effectively, and be loyal to their organizations. The paper also concludes that sustainable learning cultures cannot be maintained by the use of policies and structural reforms exclusively but rather entrenched in relational leadership practices. The care and trust leadership also led to more stability in the institutions, less burnout among the professionals and the survival of common values in spite of external stress and evolving requirements. The results support the fact that the concepts of leadership in the education industry is essentially a moral and relational process that demands constant ethical decision-making and human interaction. All in all, the research is relevant to educational leadership studies as it offers empirical data that trust and care-based leadership is at the heart of maintaining learning cultures. The study, by enlightening the lived experience of the educators, reveals the significance of relational leadership in long-term educational development and resilience in the organizations.

Recommendations

According to the research results, following recommendations strongly offered to educational practice, leadership development, and policy:

1. The development of professional leadership preparation and development programs must explicitly include the use of trust- and care-based leadership competencies, such as making ethically sound decisions, communicating empathetically, and relationship skills.
2. Leaders in the education sector must emphasize on open decision making, uniformity in practice and free flow of information to enhance a feeling of trust in institutions. Daily leadership routines should have care-oriented practices, which include emotional support and identification of professional challenges.
3. The educational institutions and schools need to establish systematic possibilities of dialogue, collaboration and common reflection, which should be supported by the leadership practices that foster psychological safety and respect.
4. Trust and care are leadership dimensions that education policymakers must identify and incorporate in leadership standards, evaluation models, and school improvement policies.
5. The proposed area of study is further suggested to be resorted to in the future to

investigate leadership in the context of trust and care at various levels, contexts, and also in different cultural backgrounds with the help of longitudinal or mixed-method studies in order to examine the long-term effects of either learning culture and educational outcomes.

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