

The Influence of Directors' Transformational Leadership on the Inclusion of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Mainstream Classrooms of Riyadh: A Pilot Mixed-Method Study

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Abstract

The key aim of this mixed-method study is to examine how director's transformational leadership impacts the inclusion of students with ASD in mainstream classrooms of Riyadh. Inclusion is extensively identified as a major component in education however, the role of school leadership, specifically transformational practices, is not thoroughly examined. The quantitative element involved 60 teachers across four educational institutes of Riyadh to evaluate teachers' inclusive practices and director's leadership behaviors. Regression analysis showed that inspirational motivation and individualized consideration were the key predictors of successful inclusion. Moreover, qualitative interviews with twelve teachers were thematically examined. The themes that emerged involved 'leadership as Sentimental Constituent', 'Impassioned Teachers, Inspired Classrooms', and 'Vision Beyond Obedience.' Teachers underscored director's individualized assistance, role-modeling, and inspired vision as fundamental to forming inclusive settings for ASD pupils. The blend of both the findings revealed that transformational leadership encourages teachers' motivation and inclusive practices. As a pilot, the study validates methodological viability and offers a basis for large-scale, longitudinal study.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Inclusive Education, Mixed-Method Research, School Leadership

Introduction

In the present world, inclusive education has acquired major momentum in the worldwide policy discourse, with global models like Salamanca Statement and the UN Convention

regarding the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) demanding reasonable educational prospects for all students (Woodcock et al., 2022). Fundamental to these models is the principle that students having distinct needs, encompassing those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), ought to access the succeed in mainstream educational contexts (Woodcock et al., 2022). ASD is regarded as a developmental ailment involving variations in social collaboration, communication, and behavior, usually necessitating distinguished instructional approaches and specialized assistance (Wang et al., 2025). Ensuring that pupils with ASD are effectively incorporated into inclusive classrooms is not only an academic issue but a systemic one, necessitating effective leadership, teacher readiness, and supportive cultures of educational institutes (Hodges et al., 2020).

The literature repeatedly exhibits that school leadership is fundamental element in influencing inclusive practices and results (Carrington et al., 2024). Leaders impact not only the resource allocation but also the beliefs, attitudes, professional growth of teachers. Within this domain, transformational leadership has appeared as an auspicious model for promoting organizational change and encouraging positive educational settings (Shah, 2021). Transformational leaders are distinguished by their capability to formulate an inspiring vision, stimulate followers, promote intellectual development, and cater to the individual requirements of their personnel. In academic environments, these characteristics align greatly with needs of inclusive education, which necessitates persistence, novelty, and the capability to mobilize distinct teams towards a set objective (Jun & Lee, 2023).

Initially, the idea of transformational leadership was presented by Burns (1978) that was later refined by Bass (1990). Bass (1990) talked about key dimensions including idealized influence (leaders function as role models and gain respect and conviction), inspirational motivation (leaders formulate vision and inspire passion), intellectual stimulation (leaders boost problem-solving and novelty), and individualized consideration (leaders offer individualized assistance to subordinates). In educational context, these dimensions appear in different ways like establishing inclusive objectives, stimulating teachers to accept diverse students, encouraging professional learning groups, and resolving challenges encountered by teachers in embracing inclusion (Bass, 1990). The juncture of transformational leadership with inclusive education therefore exhibits a theoretically vibrant but unexamined research area.

Regardless of the established prominence of leadership in promoting inclusive education, there is a restricted practical work that clearly explores how transformational leadership practices impacts the inclusion of pupils with ASD in mainstream classrooms. The current literature regarding inclusion emphasizes instructional practices, teachers' attitudes, or systemic obstacles, usually ignoring the leadership role as a driving force. Also, studies that integrate leadership usually encompass broad viewpoints, exploring leadership in relation to special education needs instead of emphasizing particularly on ASD (Wang et al., 2023). It shows a fundamental gap, provided that ASD offers distinct challenges like communication obstacles, sensory sensitivities, and the requirement for formalized learning settings. Leaders who can motivate teachers, offer personalized assistance, and encourage a culture of interaction may be specifically well placed to support successful ASD inclusion.

The current study addresses this gap by piloting a mixed-methods tactic to examine the influence of director's transformational leadership style on the inclusion of ASD students. By

blending quantitative and qualitative measures regarding inclusive practices, leadership, and teacher's experiences, the research offers a thorough viewpoint about the ways leadership behaviors get converted into inclusive educational practices. Such a tactic not only reinforces validity through methodological triangulation but also offers comprehensions regarding systems by which leadership directs influence.

Performing this study as pilot feasibility research offers different purposes. Firstly, it facilitates testing the appropriateness of the mixed-methods approach for comprehending complex associations between inclusion and leadership (Cope, 2015). Secondly, it produces preliminary evidence that can assist large-scale pragmatic research. Thirdly, it rests the discussion within the persistent international concern of ASD inclusion, therefore safeguarding significance for both policymakers and practitioners (Cope, 2015).

The prominence of this research exists in its probable contributions at different levels. Talking about the theoretical level, it expands transformational leadership theory into different ASD inclusion' domains, providing an augmented comprehension of how leadership behaviors collaborate with the genuine realities of teaching distinct pupils. Talking about the practical level, it provides school leaders with comprehensions regarding how their leadership tactic may impact inclusive practices. Regarding policy level, it underscores the significance of leadership development schemes that clearly talk about inclusive education, safeguarding that leaders are prepared to encourage settings where ASD students can flourish.

Therefore, this research is based on the following fundamental research question: *what is the influence of director's transformational leadership style on the inclusion of ASD students in inclusive classroom?*

Therefore, this research intends to contribute to both practice and scholarship, providing a basis upon which more elaborative empirical study can be formed. The incorporation of qualitative and quantitative techniques safeguards a thorough viewpoint, while the pilot aspect of the study offers flexibility to enhance instruments, recognize issues, and augment methodological precision in the other studies.

Literature Review

Inclusive Education: International and Local Viewpoints

The notion of inclusive education has become a basis of global education strategy. The Salamanca Statement underscored that mainstream schools ought to facilitate all learners, despite social, physical, or language barriers (Connie et al., 2025). In the recent times, the UN Conventions regarding Rights of persons with disabilities highlighted the country's responsibilities to safeguard equal access to quality education for students with disabilities (Moriyasu et al., 2025). These models have influenced national educational strategies internationally, fostering reforms that prefer inclusivity and synchronization (Moriyasu et al., 2025).

Inclusive education involves not only physical presence in mainstream schools but also safeguarding significant participation, academic accomplishment, and social incorporation for all students (Julien, 2025). Regarding ASD students, inclusion encompasses addressing problems like social interaction challenges, sensory issues, and the requirement for structured assistance (Meindl et al., 2020). Research indicates that when rightly assisted, ASD

students get advantage from inclusive environments through augmented social occasions and enhanced academic results (Meindl et al., 2020). Though, effective inclusion necessitates beyond individual teacher measures; it needs systemic dedication and successful leadership at the school level.

Comprehending Autism Spectrum Disorder in Educational Settings

ASD is a neurodevelopment problem involving challenges in social interaction and collaboration, blended with repetitive and restrictive behavioral patterns (Attard & Booth, 2023). The spectrum aspect of ASD shows differences in support requirements, encompassing minimal alterations to rigorous individualized assistance. Regarding educators, this variability posits key problems in designing curriculum, managing classroom settings, and encouraging peer recognition (Solis et al., 2022).

The studies underscore different obstacles to ASD inclusion. Teachers display inadequate training, resource scarcity, and increased level of pressure when dealing with ASD students (Attard & Booth, 2023). Classroom related challenges encompass managing behavioral issues and administering sensory overload (Solis et al., 2022). Without appropriate assistance, teachers may find it problematic to develop an inclusive setting that maintains a balance between requirements of ASD students and other learners (Arora et al., 2025). This highlights the significance of systemic elements like leadership that can impact training acquisition, allocation of resources, and the inclusive culture.

The Role of Leadership in Education

Educational leadership has long been identified as a key determinant of school efficacy. Toprak (2020) stated that leadership plays an integral role in classroom teaching and impacts student related outcomes. Effective leadership influence school vision, shape professional capability, and encourages climate appropriate to novelty and synchronization (Toprak, 2020). Regarding Inclusion, leadership plays a central role in stimulating parents, educators, and external stakeholders towards mutual objectives of access and equity (Korkmaz et al., 2022).

In educational research, different leadership tactics have been studied. Instructional leadership underscores teaching practices and curriculum, though distributed leadership emphasizes collaborative decision-formation across school personnel (Hsieh et al., 2025). However, transformational leadership has acquired importance owing to its capability to instigate change, form commitment, and manage complicated organizational problems. Inclusive education necessitates cultural and pedagogical changes, and transformational leadership provides a specifically related model (Jiang et al., 2025).

Transformational Leadership: Theory and Scope

The idea of transformational leadership, presented by Burns (1978) and further expanded by Bass (1990) has become a key model in educational and organizational research. Transformational leadership involves four key dimensions.

1. Idealized Influence: Leaders function as role models, gaining trust and esteem through vibrant values and strong behavior.
2. Inspirational Motivation: Leaders develop an inspiring vision that stimulates subordinates to exceed self-interest (Bass, 1990).

3. Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders foster critical thinking and novelty, stimulating assumptions and encouraging creativity.
4. Individualized Consideration: Leaders cater to the distinct requirements and development of each subordinate, offering assistance and coaching (Bass, 1990).

In educational institutes, these magnitudes get converted into behaviors like motivating teachers to accept diversity, promoting novel teaching tactics, and assisting individual teachers in forming inclusive capabilities. Studies reveal that transformational leadership augments teacher motivation, job commitment, and dedication towards organizational goals, all elements that impact student related outcomes indirectly (Hsieh et al., 2025).

Transformational Leadership and Inclusive Education

Different studies have examined the association between inclusive measures and transformational leadership. Alainati et al. (2023) underscored that inclusive education necessitates leadership that can mobilize resources, influence traditional norms, and promote interactive cultures. Transformational leaders are regarded as capable and proficient to meet these functions (Lambrecht et al., 2020). They can formulate inclusion as a mutual vision, motivate teachers to perceive diversity as a resource, and offer tailored assistance to personnel who consider inclusive practices as hard and challenging (Lambrecht et al., 2020). Empirical research shows that transformational leadership is positively related to attitude of teachers towards inclusion, their readiness to accept instruction, and the execution of inclusive practices (Carrington et al., 2024). For example, exploration of distinct educational environments has revealed that schools run by transformational leaders are more probable to develop interactive problem-solving cultures, which are fundamental for managing the diverse requirements of students with disabilities. Leaders who represent inspirational motivation may perceive inclusion not as a pressure but as a prospect for development, thus lessening resistance and encouraging teachers' input (Carrington et al., 2024).

Leadership and ASD-Specific Inclusion

Though an extensive literature supports the association between inclusion and transformational leadership, comparatively few studies emphasize particularly on ASD, there exists a considerable gap, provided the distinct problems related to ASD inclusion (Halder et al., 2022). Teachers usually necessitate specialized training to execute approaches like visual assistance, formal teaching tactics, and social skills learning (Halder et al., 2022). Leaders who offer access to such training, allocate resources for assisting personnel, and support ASD-oriented strategies can make a considerable difference in the accomplishment of inclusion (Dennehy et al., 2024).

Initial studies showed that school leaders implement inclusive leadership styles impact not only teacher attitudes but also guardian's conviction and student experiences (Stadnick et al., 2019). For instance, schools where leaders promptly focus on the betterment of ASD learners tend to have improved associations with guardians, enhanced interaction with external consultants, and better execution of individualized education plans. However, most current studies are context-specific, or emphasize wider concept of special education requirement instead of ASD. This underscores the requirement for research precisely associating transformational leadership with ASD-inclusive measures (Stadnick et al., 2019).

Educational Leadership and Inclusion: Mixed-Methods Research

Exploring the impact of leadership on inclusion necessitates techniques capable of recording both vibrant contextual comprehension and measurable associations. Quantitative methodologies, like questionnaires and regression analysis, are valuable for recognizing patterns and testing hypothesis regarding the impact of leadership magnitude on inclusion results (Ghanad, 2023). However, they usually fail to record the subtle procedures through which leadership applies its influence.

Qualitative techniques, like thematic analysis and interviews, offer key comprehension regarding leadership behaviors, teacher experiences, and cultural forces. Mixed methods design blends the pros of both approaches, facilitating triangulation and in-depth insights (Bleiker et al., 2019). Regarding inclusive studies, it is specifically significant, as it supports researchers to relate leadership practices with both the lived experiences and statistical consistency of students and teachers (Bleiker et al., 2019).

Research Gap

Regardless of increasing interest in inclusive leadership, there exists an absence of empirical evidence that:

- Explore transformational leadership particularly in terms of ASD inclusion.
- Utilize mixed-methods designs to incorporate qualitative comprehensions with quantitative patterns.
- Place leadership as a systemic driver of school environment and teacher practices in ASD contexts.

Most studies either emphasize greatly inclusion or explored leadership without particular focus on ASD. It develops confusion in comprehending how leaders can promote settings where ASD students are vibrantly involved and appreciated.

The Present Study

This pilot feasibility study intends to overcome this gap by examining the influence of transformational leadership style of school director regarding ASD inclusion utilizing a mixed-methods technique. By inspecting both statistical associations and teacher experiences, the study seeks to offer preliminary evidence and measure the feasibility of this methodological tactic for extensive scale study. The research plays an integral role towards theoretical discussions by expanding transformational leadership theory to the ASD inclusion's domain and provides practical comprehension regarding school leaders intending to encourage inclusive cultures.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a pilot-methods feasibility design to examine the association between transformational leadership style of directors and the inclusion of ASD students in mainstream schools of Riyadh. Mixed methods designs are globally known for their capability to record both the patterns of quantitative associations and the insights gained from qualitative experiences (Kurtaliqi et al., 2024).

Regarding rationale for a pilot study, this study meant to test the feasibility of utilizing combined survey and interview instruments with respect to ASD inclusion. Also, it sought to

produce primary evidence that could assist broader scaled future research. As a feasibility study, it facilitated refinement of processes, and analytical approaches, therefore, safeguarding methodological strength before scaling up.

A convergent parallel design was formulated, where qualitative and quantitative data was gathered side by side, examined individually, and then incorporated during interpretation. This design was selected as it facilitates direct contrast and findings' triangulation, offering a more thorough comprehension of leadership influences on inclusion.

Research Questions

The study was based on the following research questions:

"What is the influence of director's transformational leadership style on the inclusion of ASD students in inclusive classroom?"

The sub questions include.

1. What is the statistical association between dimensions of transformational leadership and teacher-informed inclusion measures for ASD students?
2. How do teachers explain the ways in which directors' leadership behaviors enable or hamper ASD inclusion?

Setting and Participants

The pilot study was performed in 4 mainstream schools of Riyadh, KSA. The schools were chosen through purposive sampling to signify diversity with respect to socioeconomic context, size, and experience with ASD inclusion.

Quantitative sample (n = 60 teachers):

- 15 teachers filled in the questionnaire (selected from each school)
- Respondents possessed the experience of teaching both at primary and lower-secondary levels.
- ASD students' inclusion in classrooms ranged from 1-5/teacher.

Qualitative sample (n = 12 teachers):

- 3 teachers participated in semi-structured interviews (selected from each school).
- Respondents possessed diversified teaching experience i.e. early-career, mid-career, senior.
- All possessed direct experience teaching at least 1 ASD student in the existing or prior academic year.

This blended approach safeguarded variability in leadership measures and inclusive settings though maintaining practicable scale for a pilot research.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data: Survey

Quantitative data was gathered utilizing a structured questionnaire comprising of three key sections.

1. Demographics- gender, age, school level, and teaching experience.
2. Transformational Leadership-gauged utilizing the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) modified for school leadership. It measured the 4 dimensions including inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized

consideration. Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) was utilized to capture the responses.

3. Inclusion Practices gauged through a scale modified from the IPI (Inclusive Practices Inventory), emphasizing ASD-based practices such as differentiation approaches, and utilization of visual aids. The responses were captured on a 5-scale Likert scale.

The survey was shared with the respondents using online portal. Participation was kept anonymous and voluntary, with the completion time of 12 minutes on average.

Qualitative Data: Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were performed with 12 teachers. The time duration for interviews was around 40-45 minutes and were audio-recorded with the respondent's consent. Transcripts were produced and anonymized before performing analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Survey data was examined utilizing SPSS. Below mentioned steps were followed.

- Descriptive Statistics was used to summarize demographic traits and mean scores regarding leadership and inclusion variables.
- For Reliability Testing, Cronbach's alpha was measured for each scale to safeguard internal consistency (threshold ≥ 0.70).
- Correlation and Regression: Pearson's correlations measured associations between inclusion practices and leadership dimensions. Multiple regression was applied to recognize the magnitude to which each leadership dimension anticipated inclusion.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis was performed to examine interview transcripts. Following process was implemented.

1. Acquaintance with the data through repetitive reading.
2. Creation of preliminary codes ("inclusive vision," "resource provision," "teacher empowerment").
3. Merging code into wider themes (Inspiring a Joint Vision, Resource Provision, Developing Teacher Capability).
4. Analyzing and filtering themes to safeguard alignment and consistency with the research question.

Integration of Findings

After performing individual analyses, qualitative and quantitative findings were incorporated through a mutual demonstration. It encompassed resonating statistical patterns with descriptive teacher quotes. This integration augmented validity by triangulating evidence and offered a vibrant, multidimensional comprehension of leadership influences.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To safeguard precision, numerous approaches were implemented:

- Quantitative validity: Recognized instruments (MLQ, IPI) were utilized, and reliability coefficients were gauged.
- Qualitative trustworthiness: Credibility was safeguarded through member checking (respondents reviewed sum-ups of their interviews). Transferability was boosted by

offering profuse descriptions of context. Dependability was backed by upholding an audit trajectory of coding choices.

- Mixed-method validity: Survey and interview data' triangulation facilitated cross-validation of findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study was performed based on institutional ethical principles. The major ethical measures encompassed:

- Informed consent gained from all respondents (Correia, 2023).
- Declaration of anonymity and confidentiality.
- Right to retract at any phase without consequence (Correia, 2023)
- Protected storage of digital data, available only to the research members.

Provided with the participation of ASD students, no direct information was gathered from children; rather, the research emphasized teachers' experiences to evade ethical risks.

Limitations of the Pilot Design

As a pilot feasibility study, it has limitations that ought to be recognized:

- Sample size was limited, restraining generalizability.
- Self-report bias may have impacted survey answers.
- Context-oriented findings may not be applied directly to other educational contexts.

However, these restrictions are intrinsic to pilot designs and attend the purpose of filtering instruments and actions for future extensive research.

Findings

This section encompasses the outcomes of the pilot mixed-methods research, divided into three distinct parts-inferential and descriptive outcomes from the survey, themes resulting from qualitative interviews, and incorporation of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Quantitative Findings

Descriptive Statistics

The survey involved sixty teachers, selected from four schools. Table 1 displays demographic traits and characteristics. Majority of respondents were female (68.3%), with a stable representation regarding teaching experience levels. Table 2 displays mean scores for leadership dimensions and inclusion practices. All scales showed good reliability ($\alpha \geq 0.80$). Teachers scored directors comparatively higher on individualized consideration ($M = 4.20$), indicating strong perceived assistance for individual teacher requirements.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	41	68.3
	Male	19	31.7
Teaching Experience	1-5 years	15	25.0%
	6-10 years	21	35.0
	11and above years	24	40.0
School Level	Primary	32	53.3
	Lower Secondary	28	46.7

Table 2

Mean Scores on Leadership and Inclusion Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Idealized Influence	3.95	0.62	0.83
Inspirational Motivation	4.12	0.58	0.81
Intellectual Stimulation	3.78	0.66	0.85
Individualized Consideration	4.20	0.55	0.87
Inclusion Practices	3.88	0.64	0.89

Correlations

Pearson's correlation analysis in Table 3 showed significant positive associations between inclusion practices and leadership dimensions. Individualized consideration possessed strongest correlation with inclusion practices ($r = .63, p < .01$).

Table 3

Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Idealized Influence	1				
2. Inspirational Motivation	.62	1			
3. Intellectual Stimulation	.59	.67	1		
4. Individualized Consideration	.65	.72	.61	1	
5. Inclusion Practices	.54	.58	.49	.63	1

Note: $p < .01$.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to anticipate inclusion practices from leadership dimensions (Table 4). The model explicated 46% of the variance regarding inclusion practices. Individualized consideration was regarded as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .34, p < .01$). Intellectual stimulation and Idealized influence displayed weaker effects.

Table 4

Regression Analysis: Predictors of Inclusion Practices

Predictor	B	t	p
Idealized Influence	0.18	1.96	0.056
Inspirational Motivation	0.22	2.31	0.024
Intellectual Stimulation	0.15	1.74	0.087
Individualized Consideration	0.34	3.82	0.001

Model statistics: $R^2 = .46$, $F(4, 55) = 11.71$, $p < .001$.

Note: $p < .05$; $p < .01$.

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of interviews produced 3 key themes, along with sub-themes, demonstrating how directors’ transformational leadership impacted ASD inclusion.

Themes	Description	Sub-themes	Description	Teacher Quotes
Theme 1: Inspiring a Joint Vision for Inclusion	Teachers repeatedly underscored that directors who transferred a positive and vibrant vision for inclusion encouraged a culture where ASD learners were esteemed members of the educational institute.	Sub-theme 1.1: Framing inclusion as prospect	Teachers explained how directors placed inclusion not as a pressure but as a prospect for individual and professional development.	“Our director usually describes that diversity is about making our classrooms vibrant. It stimulates us to think in a diverse manner regarding challenges.” (Teacher, School B)
		Sub-theme 1.2: Symbolic leadership Efficacy	Directors demonstrated inclusive values by participating in ASD awareness seminars and evidently assisting special events.	“When parents observe the director attending an ASD awareness program, they understand that the school is thoughtful regarding inclusion.” (Teacher, School A).
Theme 2: Building Teacher Capability through Support	Teachers emphasized individualized consideration as the most influential leadership behavior.	Sub-theme 2.1: Offering professional development	Directors organized ASD-oriented sessions and invited consultants.	“We attended training regarding visual schedules, and it completely altered how I assist my ASD students.” (Teacher, School C)
		Sub-theme 2.2: Direct mentoring	Teachers valued directors’ willingness to discuss classroom challenges privately.	“I taught a student who had intense sensory problems, and the director supported me to brainstorm. This action made me feel valued and supported.” (Teacher, School C)

<p>Theme 3: Developing Structures and Resources</p>	<p>Outside vision and support, teachers observed the significance of directors safeguarding systemic enablers.</p>	<p>Sub-theme 3.1: Assigning resources</p>	<p>Directors offered teacher aids or modified classroom layouts.</p>	<p>“When I requested for additional assistance for transitions, the director managed to have a classroom aide within 10 days.” (Teacher, School D)</p>
		<p>Sub-theme 3.2: Promoting collaboration</p>	<p>Directors fostered interaction with parents/guardians and external experts.</p>	<p>“We arranged frequent meetings and discussions with parents and external experts, supported by the director. It facilitated inclusive practices.” (Teacher, School B)</p>

Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

When synthesized, the findings showed strong association between teacher narratives and statistical correlations and patterns.

The regression analysis demonstrated individualized consideration as the major predictor of inclusive measures. Teacher narratives strengthened it, underscoring the significance of personal assistance, coaching, and professional growth prospects. Also, inspirational motivation appeared as a key predictor quantitatively. Qualitative findings supported it, as teachers stated being encouraged by directors’ visualization and symbolic leadership acts. Intellectual stimulation and idealized influence, though positively correlated with inclusion, proved to be less statistically predictive. It aligned with qualitative findings, where teachers appreciated these dimensions but considered them less directly influential in contrast to individualized support. Table 5 shows a joint display of quantitative and qualitative findings.

Table 5

Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Leadership Dimension	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Theme	Integration
Individualized Consideration	Strongest predictor ($\beta = .34, p < .01$)	Theme 2: Building Teacher Capability through Support	Strong convergence – teachers highlighted personal assistance as critical.
Inspirational Motivation	Significant predictor ($\beta = .22, p < .05$)	Theme 1: Inspiring a Joint Vision for Inclusion	Convergence – directors’ vision stimulated inclusive practices.
Idealized Influence	Positive correlation, weaker predictor	Theme 1.2: Symbolic leadership Efficacy	Partial convergence – respected role modelling observed, but less direct impact.
Intellectual Stimulation	Positive correlation, non-significant	Theme 3.2: Promoting Collaboration	Partial divergence – innovation promoted, but less directly related to ASD inclusion.

Summary of Findings

The pilot study showed that transformational leadership greatly influences the ASD students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Quantitative data underscored individualized consideration and inspirational motivation as the most impactful dimension though qualitative findings showed how these dimensions are embedded in practice. Synthesis of findings highlights the significance of leadership that is regarded both as assistive and visionary at the individual teacher level.

Discussion

Restating the Purpose

The objective of this study was to explore the influence of director's transformational leadership on the ASD students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. By synthesizing survey findings from 60 teachers with interview data findings from 12 respondents, the research examined how transformational leadership dimensions anticipate inclusive practices and in what manner teachers experience leadership behaviors at workplace. The outcomes showed that inspirational motivation and individualized consideration were the most impactful leadership behaviors, both thematically and statistically.

Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

The quantitative outcomes exhibited strong positive relationships between the transformational leadership dimensions and inclusion practices, aligned with previous studies linking transformational leadership to teacher efficacy and organizational results. However, regression analysis enhanced this image by displaying that only inspirational motivation and individualized consideration were important predictors of inclusion practices.

The findings resonate with research that focuses on motivational and relational facets of leadership in inclusive context. Though intellectual stimulation and individualized influence are significant for encouraging novelty and modeling ethical conduct, they may not directly get converted into key approaches for ASD inclusion. Rather, what seems to be valued most is leader's capability to individually assist and support teachers and develop a promising inclusive vision.

Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis offered profound comprehensions regarding how directors implement these leadership behaviors. Teachers acknowledged directors who portrayed inclusion as a prospect, formulated inclusive values, and provided tangible resources like training opportunities and support personnel. Prominence was given to individualized assistance, directors who provided direct support to teachers, resolved classroom-related problems, and offered personalized resources were considered as forming the biggest impact on ASD inclusion.

These findings strengthen the notion that inclusive leadership necessitates not only systemic vision but also focuses on the requirements of the teachers. The data recommend that when directors cater to the individual and mutual dimensions of school culture, they encourage settings where teachers feel valued and authorized to alter and implement novel practices in favor of ASD students.

Integration with Existing Literature

The synchronized findings align with transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1990), specifically the focus on inspirational motivation and individualized consideration. However, the research expands the literature in the following key manner.

ASD-oriented emphasis: Though most leadership and inclusion studies has regarded “special educational needs” as an extensive domain, this research underscores ASD as a differentiated context necessitating particular leadership behaviors. The findings highlight that individualized consideration is specifically prominent provided the distinct and complicated requirements of ASD students (Silva et al., 2024).

Pilot-mixed method viability: By exhibiting convergence between qualitative and quantitative outcomes, this research exhibits the value and viability of mixed-methods designs in educational leadership study. The mutual demonstration underscored not only the statistical association but also the practical systems through which leadership behaviors impact inclusion (Lambrecht et al., 2020).

Teacher experience-Mediating factor: In this study, teachers highlighted how director’s leadership lessened pressure and created confidence. It is aligned with the research demonstrating that teacher self-efficacy acts as a mediator between leadership and student-related results (Alainati et al., 2023). The teachers, in ASD settings, usually show lack of preparation and seek director’s support to succeed.

Practical Implications

The findings hold different implications for school leadership practice.

- **Professional growth:** Director ought to emphasize ASD-oriented professional growth for teachers, strengthening inclusion as component of the school’s long-term strategy (Leifler, 2020).
- **Tailored mentoring:** Tailored assistance from directors can lessen teacher’s pressure and enhance readiness to implement inclusive practices.
- **Resource allocation:** Safeguarding that teachers have proper access to equipment, training resources, aids, and interactive prospects with specialists is vital.
- **Cultural Leadership:** Symbolic actions and inspirational quotes like directors participating in ASD events support forming a culture where is regarded as a mutual value (Leifler, 2020).

These comprehensions indicate that leadership training programs ought to incorporate content regarding inclusive leadership, with a particular emphasis on ASD.

Theoretical Contributions

Regarding theoretical contributions, this study underscores how dimensions of transformational leadership function in ASD-inclusive contexts. Though previous studies support the association between inclusive education and transformational leadership, this suggest indicates that not all dimensions hold similar impact. Inspirational motivation and individualized consideration appeared as fundamental, whereas idealized influence and intellectual stimulation , though related, were less predictive. This comprehension enhances transformational leadership theory by placing it in the particular context of ASD inclusion.

Limitations

This study has different limitations but ought to be comprehended. The quantitative sample size was considerably small, which limits the findings' generalizability and recommends that the regression analysis, though important, must be replicated with larger sample sizes to reinforce reliability. Also, the study was performed in four different schools within a one district, making the outcomes potentially less relatable to global or rural educational contexts. As both the interview and survey data based in the self-analysis of teachers, the outcomes may have been impacted by individual attitudes towards inclusion or directors, thus presenting the risk of bias. Though the focus on teachers supported in evading ethical issues, the exclusion of parents and ASD learners' viewpoints restricted the study scope. Future research ought to thus implement mixed methods and larger-scale study that integrates different stakeholders' input to offer a thorough comprehension of the leadership's role in encouraging ASD inclusion.

Directions for Future Research

This pilot study creates different key avenues for future studies. Future research ought to focus on larger, multi-district studies to validate the generalizability of the associations between inclusion and leadership cross more distinct settings. Longitudinal techniques would be appreciated, as they could gauge the influence of transformational leadership behaviors over time and show how sustained measures impact inclusive results. Also, intervention-based research could be utilized to assess the efficacy of leadership training schemes that particularly focus on inspirational motivation and individualized support.

Therefore, scaling up the scope of inquiry to encompass the viewpoints of ASD students, parents/guardians, and support personnel would offer a clear comprehension of how leadership influences inclusion. By exhibiting both feasibility and generating primary insights, this pilot study forms the basis of more thorough and insightful explorations in the future.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of director's transformational leadership on the inclusion of ASD students in mainstream classrooms through a pilot study. Findings showed that inspirational motivation and individualized consideration were the most impactful dimensions, based on both qualitative and quantitative evidence. Teachers' explained director's individualized assistance, vision articulation, and resource provision as the critical enablers of ASD inclusion (Leifler, 2020).

On the theoretical basis, the study explored transformational leadership by recognizing which dimensions are the most useful when talking about ASD-inclusive settings. Practically, it underscores the requirement for leadership development that focuses on visionary communication and relational assistance. Though limited in terms of scale, the pilot validates the feasibility of mixed-methods study in this domain and offers a vibrant basis for future long-scale research.

Therefore, the study strengthens that inclusion is not attained by policies only-rather by the everyday leadership practices of school directors. Transformational leaders who assist, motivate, and empower teachers develop contexts where ASD students can flourish as the key members of inclusive settings.

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