

THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEADERSHIP STYLE, AND STRESS MANAGEMENT ON SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE

Adornike Joy NKOMADU

Department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counselling

Faculty of Education

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria.

adornikejoynkomadu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

School administrators play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of educational institutions through their ability to influence teacher performance and overall school climate. This study examines the interconnected effects of emotional intelligence, leadership style, and stress management on teacher outcomes, emphasizing the mediating role of school climate. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, and transformational leadership theory, the paper argues that these leadership competencies are critical to sustaining teacher engagement, instructional quality, and retention. Leaders with high emotional intelligence promote trust, empathy, and constructive communication, thereby reducing conflict and enhancing collegiality. Leadership styles such as transformational, servant, and distributed leadership further reinforce positive climates by promoting inclusivity, collaboration, and shared vision. In addition, stress management practices are shown to buffer occupational demands, mitigate burnout, and sustain teacher well-being, all of which improve professional outcomes. The review of recent empirical evidence highlighted that the impact of leadership and stress management is not direct but largely mediated by school climate. Positive climates characterized by fairness, trust, and openness enhance teacher motivation and resilience, whereas negative climates exacerbate stress, disengagement, and attrition. The findings suggest that integrating emotional intelligence, adaptive leadership styles, and stress management strategies into leadership development programs is essential for improving teacher performance and educational quality.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Style, Stress Management, School Climate; Teacher Performance, Transformational Leadership, Teacher Retention, Teacher Well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are dynamic organizations where leadership significantly impacts climate and teacher performance. Administrators' competencies, particularly in emotional regulation, leadership behavior, and stress management, contribute directly to creating conducive learning environments (Williams, 2024). Education systems across the world are increasingly acknowledging the critical role of school leadership in shaping the quality of teaching and learning. In contemporary school settings, the performance of teachers is not solely dependent on their pedagogical expertise but is also significantly influenced by the emotional intelligence, leadership style, and stress management strategies employed by school administrators. These factors collectively contribute to the overall school climate, which serves as a foundation for teacher motivation, satisfaction, and effectiveness (Manzoor & Kumar, 2024).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a vital competency for effective educational leadership. Leaders with higher EI are capable of managing their own emotions and those of their colleagues, thereby promoting positive interactions and minimizing conflict (Williams, 2024). Research shows that emotionally intelligent school heads build trust, inspire commitment, and enhance teachers' sense of efficacy, leading to improved performance outcomes (Jamilah & Putra, 2025). In an environment where teachers face growing demands, ranging from curriculum reforms to increased accountability, EI in leadership provides emotional support that sustains motivation and resilience. Emotional intelligence EI is closely tied to leadership style because it plays a vital role on teachers outcome. Transformational, servant, and distributed leadership models have been associated with higher teacher engagement, collaboration, and adaptability to change, while transactional leadership although useful for maintaining structure often fails to nurture innovation (Alias & Abdullah, 2025). Leadership approaches that emphasize inclusivity, empathy, and empowerment create a positive school climate, which not only improves teacher morale but also encourages collective responsibility for student learning outcomes. This reflects the growing scholarly consensus that leadership style functions as both a direct and indirect determinant of school performance.

Stress management is another significant dimension of Teaching and school administration as it is widely recognized as high-stress professions, with educators often experiencing burnout due to workload, student discipline, and systemic pressures. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, states that when job demands outweigh resources, performance and well-being decline (Hearld, Enard & Walter, 2025). School administrators who utilize effective stress management strategies both for themselves and for their staff mitigate these risks, stimulating a more stable and supportive climate. Thus teachers in such environments are more likely to sustain high levels of engagement, creativity, and instructional quality (Usman, 2025)

The school climate itself functions as a mediating construct in this relationship. A positive climate is characterized by trust, collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect. Studies demonstrate that supportive climates increase job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and enhance teachers' willingness to invest effort in professional growth (Williams, 2024; Manzoor & Kumar, 2024). Conversely, a toxic or unsupportive climate exacerbates stress, reduces teacher efficacy, and undermines overall school effectiveness. Given these interconnections, the present study investigates the combined effects of administrators' emotional intelligence, leadership style, and stress the management on both school climate and teacher performance. This approach fills a gap in the literature by integrating three critical

dimensions that are often examined in isolation and how these factors interact and influence both school climate and teacher performance. Situating the study within current theoretical and empirical debates, it contributes to a more holistic understanding of how leadership practices shape educational outcomes in the 21st century.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Emotional Intelligence and School Leadership

Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as critical for school leaders. High-EI administrators display empathy, adaptability, and social awareness, which promotes trust and collaboration among staff. Research shows EI predicts teachers' job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and increased motivation (Goleman et al., 2020; Williams, 2024). EI positively correlates with collective teacher efficacy, enhancing instructional practices (Salovey & Grewal, 2021).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become an indispensable competency in the domain of educational leadership, particularly in addressing the complex challenges faced by schools in the 21st century. Defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2016), EI enables school leaders to manage interpersonal relationships effectively and promotes positive organizational climates. Within school settings, administrators with high EI are better positioned to navigate the emotional demands of their roles, build trust among staff, and motivate teachers toward collective goals (Williams, 2024).

Goleman's (1998) framework of EI comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills has been particularly influential in educational contexts. Leaders who demonstrate these competencies create psychologically safe environments where teachers feel valued and supported. For instance, empathy allows leaders to recognize teacher stress and provide timely support, while social skills enable them to mediate conflicts and encourage collaboration (Manzoor & Kumar, 2024). Research further suggests that emotionally intelligent school leaders nurture higher teacher commitment, professional satisfaction, and overall performance (Jamilah & Putra, 2025). EI contributes to leaders' adaptability in diverse cultural and organizational settings.

As schools become increasingly multicultural, emotionally intelligent leadership supports inclusive practices, reduces misunderstandings, and enhances communication across diverse groups (Alias & Abdullah, 2025). Leaders also set behavioral standards that shape teachers' attitudes toward stress and conflict management by modeling emotional regulation. EI in school leadership does not operate in isolation but intersects with leadership style and stress management. According to Hearld et al. (2025), leaders with higher EI are more likely to adopt transformational or servant leadership styles, which emphasize inspiration, empathy, and support, thereby reinforcing a positive school climate and enhancing teacher performance.

Leadership Style and School Climate

Leadership style reflects the approach leaders adopt in directing and motivating staff. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, inspiration, and individualized consideration, is associated with higher teacher motivation, collaboration, and professional growth (Manzoor & Kumar, 2024). Leadership style is a determinant of school climate.

Transformational leadership promotes innovation, shared vision, and professional development, whereas authoritarian styles often undermine morale. Studies emphasize that transformational and distributed leadership correlate with positive school climates and higher teacher engagement (Li et al., 2021; Al-Mahdy & Emam, 2022). Conversely, transactional leadership is linked with compliance but limited intrinsic motivation

Ololube (2017, 2024) stressed that leadership should be adaptive and adjusting to meet situational demands. This is consistent with contingency theory, which argues that no single style is universally effective. In contrast, authoritarian leadership creates rigid, compliance-driven cultures that suppress creativity and reduce morale (Abdullah & Alias, 2025; Ololube et al., 2013). Studies (e.g., Ololube, 2024; Williams, 2024) have shown that participatory and supportive leadership promotes stronger climates of trust and reduces resistance to change. Transactional leadership, while useful for maintaining order, has limited long-term impact on intrinsic motivation. Ultimately, leadership style functions as the behavioral expression of administrators' emotional intelligence and interacts closely with stress management practices.

Leadership style has long been recognized as one of the most influential determinants of school effectiveness, directly shaping the environment in which teachers and students operate. In educational contexts, leadership refers not only to the formal authority exercised by administrators but also to the relational processes through which leaders motivate, influence, and inspire their staff (Leithwood et al., 2020). The way a leader manages communication, decision-making, and conflict significantly impacts the school climate, which in turn affects teacher performance, job satisfaction, and student achievement outcomes.

Transformational leadership has been consistently associated with positive school climates. Transformational leaders support culture of collaboration and trust can be emphasized through vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Li, Zhang & Sun, 2021). Such leaders inspire teachers to go beyond their contractual duties, instilling a sense of collective purpose that improves morale and commitment (Ololube, 2017). Wang (2022) demonstrated that schools led by transformational leaders often display stronger collegial relationships and greater adaptability to change.

Servant leadership provides another relevant framework. Grounded in empathy, service, and support, this style positions the leader as a facilitator of teacher growth and well-being (Eva et al., 2019). Servant leaders prioritize teachers' personal and professional needs, thereby reducing stress and promoting mutual respect. Schools that adopt servant leadership approaches often report stronger climates of trust, with teachers more willing to collaborate and invest effort in pedagogical innovation (Alias & Abdullah, 2025).

To Spillane (2006), distributed leadership emphasizes the importance of collaboration by sharing leadership responsibilities across teachers and staff. Rather than centralizing decision-making, distributed leadership builds collective ownership of school goals. Leithwood et al. (2020) suggested that such inclusivity enhances teacher empowerment, encourages participatory decision-making, and creates climates of openness and accountability. Teachers in such environments perceive themselves as valued stakeholders, which strengthens their professional identity and reduces turnover intention.

Transactional leadership emphasizes rewards and punishments, has mixed effects on school climate. While transactional practices may provide structure and ensure compliance, they rarely promote innovation or intrinsic motivation (Al-Mahdy & Emam, 2022). A climate overly shaped by transactional leadership may risk being rigid, with limited opportunities for teachers to exercise autonomy or creativity

Leadership style not only shapes climate directly but also mediates the impact of stress and emotional intelligence on performance. Leaders who adopt supportive and participatory styles tend to buffer the effects of teacher stress, thereby sustaining performance under challenging conditions (Niu & Wang, 2023). On the other hand, authoritarian or unsupportive leadership exacerbates stress, undermining trust and collegiality.

Manzoor and Kumar (2024) study has shown that in the context of rapid educational reforms, the effectiveness of leadership styles in shaping climate is particularly critical. Positive school climates characterized by open communication, collaboration, and fairness enhance teacher resilience and willingness to engage in continuous professional development. In contrast, negative climates fuel burnout, absenteeism, and high attrition rates. Thus, leadership style serves as a key mechanism through which administrators influence the school climate. Transformational, servant, and distributed leadership styles are most conducive to creating climates that support teacher performance and student learning. Transactional approaches, while useful in certain contexts, are insufficient to sustain long-term teacher engagement. Thus, understanding the dynamics of leadership style is essential for developing interventions aimed at strengthening school climate and enhancing teacher performance hereby threatening the overall quality of education (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2022).

Stress Management and Teacher Performance

Stress is an inevitable component of the teaching profession due to the complex demands associated with curriculum implementation, student discipline, parental expectations, and accountability pressures. For school leaders, the ability to effectively manage stress both personally and in support of their staff has become a critical factor in sustaining teacher performance. Unmanaged stress often leads to burnout, absenteeism, and reduced instructional quality, while effective stress management stimulates resilience, motivation, and professional growth (Kyriacou, 2021).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model offers a useful framework for understanding stress in educational contexts. It suggests that teacher stress arises when job demands exceed the available resources, leading to emotional exhaustion and diminished performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). School leaders who are proactive in balancing demands with resources such as providing mentoring, promotes collegiality, and reducing administrative overload help mitigate the negative effects of stress. In doing so, they cultivate environments where teachers can thrive despite challenging circumstances (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2022).

Effective stress management strategies encompass both organizational and individual interventions. At the organizational level, leaders can implement professional development workshops on stress coping skills, create supportive peer networks, and encourage work-life balance through reasonable scheduling (Niu & Wang, 2023). At the individual level, administrators can model positive coping strategies such as emotional regulation, mindfulness, and adaptive problem-solving, thereby setting behavioral standards for teachers (Williams, 2024). These strategies are particularly important in preventing the “contagion effect,” where leader stress spills over into the broader school climate, exacerbating teacher anxiety and reducing performance.

Stress management is closely linked to emotional intelligence (EI). Leaders with high EI are more adept at recognizing early signs of teacher stress, providing timely support; promote climates of empathy and trust. Jamilah and Putra (2025) argued that emotionally intelligent

school heads are better positioned to manage conflict and reduce stress, thereby enhancing teacher well-being and classroom performance. In this sense, EI acts as a protective factor, enabling leaders to employ relational strategies that buffer stress and promote resilience.

However, stress management has significant implications for teacher retention and professional identity. High levels of stress often lead to attrition, particularly among novice teachers who may struggle with workload and classroom management challenges. Leaders who provide adequate support and stress reduction mechanisms create climates that increase teacher commitment, reduce turnover intention, and strengthen job satisfaction (Manzoor & Kumar, 2024). This, in turn, contributes to continuity in teaching practices and overall school effectiveness.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory further reinforces the importance of stress management in leadership. It posits that individuals strive to acquire and protect valuable resources such as time, energy, and social support and that stress occurs when these resources are threatened or lost (Hobfoll, 1989). Administrators who ensure that teachers' resources are replenished through mentoring, recognition, and workload adjustments help protect teacher well-being, thereby enhancing their performance.

Stress management is not merely an individual skill but a leadership responsibility with direct implications for teacher performance. Leaders who balance demands with resources, demonstrate emotional intelligence, and implement supportive interventions promote climates where teachers are resilient, motivated, and effective. By contrast, leaders who neglect stress management risk perpetuating burnout and diminished performance, undermining both school climate and student learning outcomes.

School Climate as Mediator

School climate serves as the organizational bridge linking leadership practices to teacher performance. Defined as the collective perceptions of values, norms, and relationships within a school, climate reflects how safe, supportive, and collaborative an environment feels. Positive climates encourage trust, job satisfaction and innovation, while negative climates erode morale and increase turnover (Jamilah & Putra, 2025). Manzoor and Kumar (2024) found that transformational leadership styles are strongly correlated with supportive climates that, in turn, boost teacher commitment. Abdullah and Alias (2025) demonstrated that participatory conflict management enhances collaboration, which positively affects instructional quality. Ololube (2017) similarly asserted that leadership success must be judged not only by administrative outcomes but by the quality of the climate cultivated. School climate thus mediates the effects of emotional intelligence, leadership style, and stress management on teacher performance.

School climate, encompassing norms, relationships, and institutional culture, mediates the relationship between leadership and teacher performance. A supportive climate improves teacher autonomy, reduces attrition and promotes collaboration (López-González et al., 2022). Studies indicate that EI and transformational leadership indirectly enhance performance via improved climate (Huang et al., 2021). School climate has increasingly been recognized as a critical mediating variable in the relationship between leadership practices, teacher well-being, and performance outcomes. Defined as the collective perception of the quality of the school environment, school climate encompasses dimensions such as trust, collaboration, communication, fairness, and safety (Thapa et al., 2019). As a mediator, school climate explains

how leadership characteristics, emotional intelligence, and stress management practices translate into measurable teacher outcomes such as engagement, instructional quality, and retention.

Emphasis has been made that leadership style exerts its effects on teacher performance largely through its influence on school climate. Transformational leadership raises trust and collaboration, creating a supportive environment that enhances teachers' motivation and professional commitment (Li, Zhang & Sun, 2021). Similarly, servant leadership strengthens relational trust, encouraging teachers to feel valued and respected, which in turn promotes higher job satisfaction and better classroom practices (Alias & Abdullah, 2025). In contrast, authoritarian or transactional leadership may weaken climate by generating tension, reducing teacher autonomy, and amplifying stress (Ololube, 2024). Emotional intelligence (EI) also indirectly impacts teacher outcomes via school climate. Leaders with high EI build empathy-driven relationships, manage conflicts constructively, and promote psychological safety (Jamilah & Putra, 2025). This emotionally supportive climate stimulates teacher resilience and motivation, mediating the relationship between leaders' EI and teachers' performance outcomes. In this way, school climate becomes the pathway through which leaders' emotional skills translate into professional effectiveness.

However stress management strategies are filtered through school climate in determining teacher well-being and effectiveness. Supportive climates characterized by open communication, collegial networks, and balanced workloads help buffer the effects of occupational stress, reducing burnout and improves job performance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2022). Conversely, unsupportive climates magnify stress, undermining teacher engagement and long-term retention (Niu & Wang, 2023).

Empirical evidence confirms this mediating role. For instance, Li et al. (2021) demonstrated that the positive effects of transformational leadership on teacher performance were significantly mediated by school climate. Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2022) found that teacher stress only translated into burnout when mediated by negative perceptions of climate, while positive climates weakened this association. These findings highlight climate as a crucial mechanism linking leadership practices and stress management to performance outcomes. School climate is not merely an outcome but a mediating mechanism through which leadership style, emotional intelligence, and stress management exert their effects. By cultivating positive climates, leaders ensure that their personal competencies and management strategies translate into sustainable improvements in teacher performance and overall school effectiveness.

Teachers' Performance Outcomes

Teacher performance encompasses instructional quality, classroom management, innovation, and professional commitment. Administrators shape performance indirectly through the climates they stand-in and directly support, guide, and the recognition they provide. Teachers in supportive climates are more motivated, resilient, and committed to professional growth, which translates into improved student outcomes (Williams, 2024). Conversely, authoritarian leadership, low emotional intelligence, and poor stress management create hostile environments that discourage initiative and fuel burnout (Ololube, 2024). Usman (2025) highlighted that unmanaged stress in leadership correlates with higher teacher turnover and diminished instructional quality. In contrast, emotionally intelligent, transformational leaders who actively manage stress create empowering environments where teachers thrive.

Performance is measured in terms of instructional delivery, innovation, collaboration, and student achievement outcomes. Teachers in schools with emotionally intelligent, transformational, and stress-resilient leaders exhibit greater professional commitment, job satisfaction, and classroom effectiveness (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2022; Oducado et al., 2023). Teacher performance is central to the success of educational systems, as it directly influences student learning outcomes, school effectiveness, and the achievement of broader educational goals. In contemporary educational discourse, teacher performance is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing instructional effectiveness, professional commitment, classroom management, engagement in continuous professional development, and contributions to the school community (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2020). It is influenced by a range of organizational, psychological, and contextual factors, including leadership style, emotional intelligence, stress management, and school climate.

Instructional effectiveness is one of the most widely acknowledged outcomes of teacher performance. Effective teachers demonstrate strong pedagogical content knowledge, employ differentiated instructional strategies, and adapt teaching methods to meet diverse learners' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Leadership support and a positive school climate enhance instructional performance by promoting motivation and professional collaboration. In contrast, high levels of stress and unsupportive school environments reduce teachers' ability to sustain instructional quality, thereby affecting student achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2022).

An important dimension of teacher performance is that it makes teaching easy as professional engagement and commitment. Teachers who feel valued and supported are more likely to engage in reflective practice, adopt innovative methodologies, and pursue continuous professional development. Transformational and servant leadership styles, in particular, are linked to higher teacher commitment, which in turn improves teaching effectiveness and organizational loyalty (Li, Zhang & Sun, 2021). Conversely, excessive workload and unmanaged stress contribute to job dissatisfaction and decreased commitment, undermining long-term performance (Niu & Wang, 2023).

Classroom management represents another critical performance outcome. Teachers who are supported through effective leadership and stress management strategies display better classroom discipline, reduced behavioral issues, and higher levels of student engagement (García-Carmona et al., 2019). School climates that encourage collaboration and collegial support empower teachers to share strategies for managing classroom challenges, thereby improving performance outcomes across the institution. Teacher well-being is also closely tied to performance. Theories such as the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model suggest that when schools provide adequate resources and stress management mechanisms, teachers experience reduced burnout and increased efficacy, which translates into better performance outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Recent studies highlight that teachers with high levels of emotional resilience and access to supportive leadership demonstrate higher levels of creativity, engagement, and sustained performance (Manzoor & Kumar, 2024).

Teacher retention and turnover intention serve as performance-related outcomes with systemic implications. High teacher turnover disrupts school continuity and negatively impacts student learning. Leaders who prioritize stress management, demonstrate emotional intelligence, and adopt inclusive leadership styles help reduce turnover intentions, thereby sustaining a stable and high-performing teaching workforce (Kyriacou, 2021).

Teachers' performance outcomes extend beyond instructional roles to include their contributions to school improvement initiatives. Teachers engaged in decision-making,

collaborative projects, and extracurricular programs enhance the overall school climate and student experience (Leithwood et al., 2020). These outcomes are maximized in climates characterized by trust, open communication, and shared leadership. Teacher performance outcomes encompass instructional quality, professional commitment, classroom management, well-being, retention, and contributions to school development. These outcomes are not merely individual attributes but the product of systemic factors such as leadership style, emotional intelligence, and stress management. Enhancing teacher performance requires supportive school climates that address professional and emotional needs, reduce stressors, and cultivate leadership practices aligned with collaboration and empowerment

CONCLUSION

The interplay among emotional intelligence, leadership style, and stress management provides a holistic lens for understanding teacher performance. The study concludes that improving teacher outcomes requires a multi-layered approach: one that invests in leaders' emotional and managerial capacities, strengthens school climate, and institutionalizes counseling as a strategic support system. For policymakers and practitioners, these findings emphasize the urgent need to design professional development programs, stress management frameworks, and counseling interventions that collectively enhance teacher effectiveness. Thus, schools can ensure not only improved teacher performance but also long-term educational quality and sustainability. The synergy of administrators' emotional intelligence, leadership style, and stress management skills creates a sustainable and productive school climate. This, in turn, elevates teacher performance and student success. Future policies should integrate EI training, adaptive leadership programs, and stress resilience frameworks into administrator preparation curricula.

Suggestions

- Schools should integrate professional development programs that enhance emotional intelligence for both leaders and teachers. Training in empathy, communication, and self-regulation improves interpersonal relationships and reduces conflicts.
- Structured stress management interventions such as mindfulness training and resilience workshops should be introduced for teachers. Such interventions reduce burnout and strengthen coping strategies.
- Coaching can help leaders adopt transformational and servant leadership approaches that nurture teacher engagement and improve school outcomes.
- Dialogue sessions and collaborative decision-making platforms, which must be facilitated by counselors to strengthen trust and collegiality to ensure inclusivity and shared responsibility.
- Career counseling can support teachers in managing burnout, clarifying goals, and strengthening long-term commitment to teaching.
- The Ministries of Education should embed counseling services into teacher support frameworks. Professional counselors specializing in occupational stress and leadership development should be employed.

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