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The Power to Empower: Examining the Relationship Between Principals' Power Bases and Teacher Empowerment in Public Secondary Schools in Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

Teacher empowerment is an important dimension of effective school leadership, yet the relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment remains insufficiently examined in Pakistan. This study investigated the relationship between teacher empowerment and principals' use of power in public secondary schools in Lahore. A quantitative correlational survey design was employed, involving 400 teachers from 40 public secondary schools, comprising 200 male and 200 female teachers. Data were collected using adapted versions of the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) and the Rahim Leader Power Inventory (RLPI), consisting of 25 and 22 items, respectively. Teacher empowerment was examined across six dimensions: decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. Principals' power bases comprised legitimate, coercive, reward, expert, and referent power. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product–moment correlation were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed a moderate positive relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power ($r = .479$, $N = 400$, $p < .001$). At the dimensional level, legitimate power was positively associated with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment, with comparatively stronger relationships with autonomy ($r = .368$), decision making ($r = .333$), impact ($r = .333$), and professional growth ($r = .314$). Expert power demonstrated its strongest association with professional growth ($r = .389$), followed by self-efficacy ($r = .312$) and autonomy ($r = .302$). Referent power was most strongly associated with autonomy ($r = .359$). Coercive and reward power generally demonstrated weaker associations with empowerment dimensions. The findings suggest that principals' formal authority, professional expertise, and interpersonal influence are relevant to teachers' perceptions of empowerment. The study contributes context-specific empirical evidence to educational leadership research by examining the relationships between five traditional power bases and six dimensions of teacher empowerment in Pakistani public secondary schools.

Keywords: Teacher empowerment, principals' power bases, legitimate power, expert power, referent power, educational leadership, public secondary schools, Pakistan

Introduction

The relationship between school principals and teachers is an important aspect of organizational functioning and school effectiveness. Principals influence teachers' professional experiences through their administrative authority, professional knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and

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organizational decisions. Their use of power can shape the extent to which teachers participate in school decisions, develop professionally, exercise autonomy, and influence institutional practices. Understanding the relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment is therefore important for examining leadership practices within educational institutions.

Teacher empowerment recognizes teachers as active professionals who contribute to school development rather than merely implement administrative instructions. Empowered teachers have opportunities to participate in institutional decisions, exercise professional judgment, develop their competencies, and influence their working environment. Short and Rinehart (1992) conceptualized school participant empowerment through six dimensions: decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. These dimensions represent teachers' involvement in organizational decisions, professional development, recognition, confidence, independence, and perceived influence within their schools.

The concept of power provides another perspective for understanding school leadership. French and Raven (1959) identified different bases of social power through which individuals influence the behaviour and decisions of others. Five traditional power bases are particularly relevant to school principals: legitimate, coercive, reward, expert, and referent power. Legitimate power arises from formal organizational authority; coercive power involves the capacity to impose penalties; reward power concerns the provision of benefits and recognition; expert power is based on professional knowledge and competence; and referent power develops through respect, admiration, and positive interpersonal relationships.

These power bases may have different relationships with teachers' professional experiences. Principals may use their legitimate authority to organize participation and delegate responsibilities. Their professional expertise may provide teachers with guidance and opportunities for professional learning. Similarly, respectful interpersonal relationships may create an environment in which teachers feel confident exercising professional judgment. Conversely, coercive and reward power represent different mechanisms of influence that may not necessarily correspond to teachers' autonomy or participation.

Previous research has examined the relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment. Lintner (2008), in a study conducted in Alabama, found that principals' expert and referent power demonstrated comparatively strong relationships with teacher empowerment, whereas coercive and reward power were less strongly associated with empowerment. Short and Johnson (1994) also investigated relationships among teacher empowerment, leader power, and organizational conflict. Gonzales and Short (1996) examined the relationship between teacher empowerment and principals' power bases, highlighting the relevance of professional expertise, rewards, interpersonal influence, and legitimate authority.

More recent research has emphasized the importance of empowering leadership and organizational relationships in supporting teachers' professional experiences. Yao and Ma (2024) demonstrated that teacher empowerment and organizational commitment helped explain the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher career satisfaction. Yao et al. (2024) highlighted the roles of trust in colleagues and affective commitment in the relationship between teacher empowerment and professionalism. KasapoğluTankutay and Çolak (2025) reported a positive

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relationship between principals' empowering leadership and teacher autonomy. Similarly, Kiral (2025) identified professional development, support, resources, communication, and collaboration as important elements of teacher empowerment. Yalçın et al. (2025) further emphasized the roles of trust, teacher professionalism, and psychological empowerment in school leadership.

In Pakistan, school principals operate within administrative structures that involve staff supervision, school management, and the implementation of educational policies. These responsibilities require principals to exercise organizational authority while maintaining professional relationships with teachers. Khan and Malik (2023) examined autonomy, empowerment, and school leadership among public school leaders in Pakistan, although their study did not specifically investigate teachers' perceptions of principals' five power bases.

Despite growing interest in distributed and empowering leadership, further empirical evidence is needed concerning the relationships between traditional social power bases and individual dimensions of teacher empowerment in Pakistani public secondary schools.

The present study addresses this research need by investigating the relationship between principals' five power bases and six dimensions of teacher empowerment in public secondary schools in Lahore. It examines both the overall relationship between the two constructs and the associations between their respective dimensions.

Literature Review

Teacher Empowerment

Teacher empowerment refers to the professional opportunities and capacities that enable teachers to participate in organizational decisions, exercise professional judgment, develop their competencies, and influence their working environment. It recognizes teachers as knowledgeable professionals whose contributions are important to school improvement and educational effectiveness.

Short and Rinehart (1992) identified six dimensions of teacher empowerment.

Decision making. This dimension concerns teachers' participation in decisions affecting school policies, instructional practices, curriculum, and professional responsibilities.

Professional growth. Professional growth refers to opportunities for teachers to improve their professional knowledge, skills, and competencies through continuous learning and development.

Status. Status represents the recognition, respect, and professional standing teachers receive within their schools and the wider educational community.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy concerns teachers' confidence in their abilities to perform instructional and professional responsibilities effectively.

Autonomy. Autonomy refers to the professional independence and discretion teachers exercise in making decisions concerning their work and instructional practices.

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Impact. Impact represents teachers' perceptions of their ability to influence school functioning, institutional decisions, and educational outcomes.

These dimensions are related but conceptually distinct. For example, teachers may feel confident in their classroom responsibilities while having limited involvement in school-level decisions. Similarly, professional recognition does not necessarily indicate substantial decision-making authority. Examining these dimensions separately provides a more comprehensive understanding of teacher empowerment.

Principals' Power Bases

Power is an important element of organizational leadership because it explains how individuals influence the behaviour, decisions, and actions of others. French and Raven's (1959) framework provides a foundation for understanding the different sources of influence available to school principals.

The five power bases examined in this study are described below.

Legitimate power. Legitimate power arises from the formal position and recognized organizational authority of the principal. Teachers acknowledge the principal's right to issue instructions and make administrative decisions because of the authority associated with the position.

Coercive power. Coercive power is based on the principal's capacity to impose disciplinary measures, penalties, or other undesirable consequences. It involves influencing teachers through the possibility of punishment.

Reward power. Reward power arises from the principal's ability to provide recognition, benefits, favourable assignments, advancement opportunities, or other organizational rewards.

Expert power. Expert power develops from the principal's professional knowledge, experience, skills, and perceived competence. Teachers may accept guidance because they recognize the principal's professional expertise.

Referent power. Referent power develops through personal respect, admiration, identification, and positive interpersonal relationships. It reflects the influence principals exercise through their professional and personal qualities.

These power bases represent different sources of organizational influence. Their relationships with teacher empowerment may depend on how principals exercise their authority and interact with teachers.

Relationship Between Principals' Power Bases and Teacher Empowerment

The relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment is important because school principals exercise organizational influence within professional environments where teachers require opportunities for independent judgment and participation.

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Legitimate power may provide the organizational authority through which principals facilitate teacher participation, delegate responsibilities, and organize collaborative decision making. The exercise of formal authority is therefore not necessarily incompatible with professional independence.

Expert power may be relevant to teachers' professional development because principals with recognized knowledge and experience can provide instructional guidance, encourage professional learning, and support teachers in addressing work-related challenges.

Referent power may also be associated with empowerment through positive interpersonal relationships, respect, and professional trust. Such relationships can create an environment in which teachers feel comfortable contributing ideas and exercising professional discretion.

In contrast, coercive and reward power represent different mechanisms of organizational influence. Although disciplinary measures and rewards may serve organizational purposes, their relationships with teachers' professional autonomy and participation may differ from those associated with expertise and interpersonal respect.

Empirical research supports the importance of these relationships. Lintner (2008) reported that expert and referent power were comparatively strongly related to teacher empowerment, while coercive and reward power demonstrated weaker relationships. Short and Johnson (1994) and Gonzales and Short (1996) also examined the relationships between leadership power and teachers' professional empowerment.

More recent studies have strengthened the broader evidence concerning empowering leadership, teacher autonomy, trust, and professional development (KasapoğluTankutay&Çolak, 2025; Kiral, 2025; Yao et al., 2024). However, these studies generally examine broader leadership practices rather than the five traditional power bases investigated in the present study.

Research Gap

Previous studies have examined teacher empowerment in relation to leadership practices, professional development, organizational commitment, trust, and teacher autonomy (Kiral, 2025; Lintner, 2008; Yao & Ma, 2024; Yao et al., 2024). Nevertheless, relatively limited context-specific empirical evidence addresses the relationships between principals' five traditional social power bases and the six dimensions of teacher empowerment in Pakistani public secondary schools.

The present study contributes to this area by examining the overall relationship between teacher empowerment and principals' use of power and the relationships between individual dimensions of the two constructs.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The study aimed to:

1. Examine the relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power.

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2. Investigate the relationships between the six dimensions of teacher empowerment and the five power bases exercised by principals.
3. Identify the power bases demonstrating comparatively stronger associations with different dimensions of teacher empowerment.

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

H_o1: There is no statistically significant relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power.

H_o2: There are no statistically significant relationships between the dimensions of teacher empowerment and the five power bases used by principals.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative correlational survey design to examine the relationship between teacher empowerment and principals' use of power in public secondary schools. Data were collected from teachers to assess their perceptions of principals' power practices and their own levels of professional empowerment.

The correlational design was appropriate because the study aimed to determine the direction and strength of relationships between the two constructs without manipulating the study variables.

Population

The target population comprised teachers serving in public boys' and girls' secondary schools in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. The study focused on teachers employed in government secondary schools.

Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Lahore. The sampling description identified Shalimar and Model Town tehsils as the two geographical areas from which the schools were selected.

Sampling Technique and Sample

A multistage sampling technique was employed to select the sample.

At the first stage, 40 public secondary schools were randomly selected, with 20 schools selected from each of the two tehsils. At the second stage, stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation of boys' and girls' secondary schools. Accordingly, 10 boys' schools and 10 girls' schools were selected from each tehsil, resulting in 20 boys' schools and 20 girls' schools.

At the third stage, 10 teachers were randomly selected from each sampled school. Thus, the final sample consisted of 400 secondary school teachers from 40 public secondary schools.

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The sample included 200 male and 200 female teachers.

Research Instruments

Data were collected through two adapted questionnaires measuring teacher empowerment and principals' use of power.

School Participant Empowerment Scale

Teacher empowerment was measured using an adapted 25-item version of the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES), developed by Short and Rinehart (1992). The original instrument established six dimensions of empowerment. For the present study, the instrument was adapted to contain 25 items distributed across these six dimensions.

The item distribution was as follows:

Dimension	Number of items
Decision making	5
Professional growth	4
Status	4
Self-efficacy	4
Autonomy	4
Impact	4
Total	25

Rahim Leader Power Inventory

Principals' power bases were measured through an adapted 22-item version of the Rahim Leader Power Inventory (RLPI), developed by Rahim (1988). The instrument measured five sources of power.

The item distribution was as follows:

Power base	Number of items
Legitimate power	5
Coercive power	3
Reward power	4
Expert power	5
Referent power	5
Total	22

Both questionnaires employed a five-point Likert response format ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Higher scores represented higher levels of the measured constructs, subject to the applicable scoring direction of individual items.

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Pilot Testing and Reliability

The instruments were pilot tested with 60 public secondary school teachers, comprising 30 male and 30 female teachers. These participants were excluded from the main sample.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to examine the internal consistency of the adapted instruments. The pilot reliability coefficients were .869 for teacher empowerment and .873 for principals' use of power.

Additional overall reliability coefficients reported for the two instruments were .782 and .809, respectively.

Instrument	Items	Pilot α	Additional reported α
Teacher empowerment (SPES)	25	.869	.782
Principals' use of power (RLPI)	22	.873	.809

The reliability coefficients indicate satisfactory internal consistency for the two adapted instruments.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher personally visited the selected public secondary schools to collect data. Permission was obtained from the respective school principals before distributing the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to the selected teachers and collected personally approximately one week later.

All 400 completed questionnaires were included in the main analysis. Participation was voluntary, and no financial incentives were provided to respondents.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to describe teachers' responses to the six empowerment dimensions and five power bases.

Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power and the relationships between their respective dimensions. All correlation tests were interpreted using two-tailed significance testing at the .05 level.

Results

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Empowerment

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Empowerment Dimensions

Dimension	M	SD
Decision making	19.98	2.260

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Professional growth	16.15	2.087
Status	17.10	1.761
Self-efficacy	15.73	2.395
Autonomy	15.59	2.329
Impact	15.23	2.256
Overall empowerment	99.78	8.700

Note. N = 400. Values represent total subscale scores.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Decision making recorded the highest mean score (M = 19.98, SD = 2.260), followed by status (M = 17.10, SD = 1.761) and professional growth (M = 16.15, SD = 2.087). Impact recorded the lowest mean score (M = 15.23, SD = 2.256).

The findings indicate that teachers reported comparatively higher scores in decision making than in the other dimensions of empowerment. However, the subscales contain different numbers of items; therefore, comparisons of raw total scores should be interpreted cautiously.

Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Power Bases

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Power Bases

Power base	M	SD
Legitimate power	19.86	2.634
Coercive power	11.70	2.233
Reward power	15.00	3.038
Expert power	20.67	2.873
Referent power	20.71	1.807
Overall principals' use of power	87.95	8.707

Note. N = 400. Values represent total subscale scores.

As shown in Table 2, referent power recorded the highest mean score (M = 20.71, SD = 1.807), closely followed by expert power (M = 20.67, SD = 2.873). Legitimate power recorded a mean of 19.86 (SD = 2.634), whereas reward power and coercive power recorded means of 15.00 (SD = 3.038) and 11.70 (SD = 2.233), respectively.

These findings suggest that teachers perceived their principals as relying comparatively more on personal sources of power, particularly referent and expert power, than on coercive and reward power. Comparisons should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously because the subscales contain different numbers of items.

Overall Relationship Between Teacher Empowerment and Principals' Use of Power

Table 3 Correlation Between Overall Teacher Empowerment and Principals' Use of Power

Variable	M	SD	r
Teacher empowerment	99.78	8.700	—
Principals' use of power	87.95	8.707	.479***

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Note. N = 400. ***p < .001, two-tailed.

Table 3 indicates a moderate positive relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power (r = .479, p < .001). This finding suggests that teachers reporting higher levels of empowerment also tended to report higher levels of principals' use of power.

The positive association indicates that principals' exercise of organizational power is not necessarily perceived exclusively as a form of control. Different power bases may be associated with different professional experiences, including teachers' participation, professional development, autonomy, and perceived influence.

The null hypothesis stating that no statistically significant relationship existed between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power was rejected.

Relationships Between Teacher Empowerment Dimensions and Principals' Power Bases

Table 4 Correlation Matrix of Teacher Empowerment Dimensions and Principals' Power Bases

Teacher empowerment dimension	Legitimate	Coercive	Reward	Expert	Referent
Decision making	.333***	.188***	.161**	.227***	.244***
Professional growth	.314***	.177***	.159**	.389***	.160**
Status	.178***	.080	−.013	.196***	.225***
Self-efficacy	.177***	.196***	.123*	.312***	.257***
Autonomy	.368***	.073	.153**	.302***	.359***
Impact	.333***	.189***	.209***	.242***	.249***

Note. N = 400. Values are Pearson's correlation coefficients. *p < .05.**p < .01.***p < .001, two-tailed. Significance levels are calculated from the reported coefficients and sample size; the coefficients are rounded to three decimal places.

Table 4 presents the relationships between all six dimensions of teacher empowerment and the five power bases exercised by principals.

Legitimate power. Legitimate power demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Its strongest association was with autonomy (r = .368), followed by decision making and impact (both r = .333), and professional growth (r = .314). Its relationships with status (r = .178) and self-efficacy (r = .177) were comparatively weaker.

Coercive power. Coercive power demonstrated comparatively weak positive relationships with decision making (r = .188), professional growth (r = .177), self-efficacy (r = .196), and impact (r = .189). The associations with status (r = .080) and autonomy (r = .073) were not statistically significant.

Reward power. Reward power demonstrated weak positive relationships with decision making (r = .161), professional growth (r = .159), self-efficacy (r = .123), autonomy (r = .153), and impact (r = .209). Its association with status was negligible and nonsignificant (r = −.013).

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Expert power. Expert power demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Its strongest association was with professional growth (r = .389), followed by self-efficacy (r = .312) and autonomy (r = .302). Additional positive associations were found with impact (r = .242), decision making (r = .227), and status (r = .196).

Referent power. Referent power demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Its strongest association was with autonomy (r = .359), followed by self-efficacy (r = .257), impact (r = .249), decision making (r = .244), and status (r = .225). The relationship with professional growth was comparatively weaker (r = .160).

Overall, the strongest dimension-level relationship was between expert power and professional growth (r = .389), followed by legitimate power and autonomy (r = .368), and referent power and autonomy (r = .359).

The second null hypothesis was rejected as a general hypothesis because statistically significant relationships were identified for most combinations of the two constructs. However, three individual relationships—coercive power with status, coercive power with autonomy, and reward power with status—were not statistically significant.

Comparative Pattern of Relationships

The correlation matrix demonstrates that principals' different power bases have distinct patterns of association with teacher empowerment.

Legitimate power showed comparatively stronger associations with decision making, professional growth, autonomy, and impact. Expert power demonstrated its strongest relationship with professional growth, while referent power showed its strongest association with autonomy.

In comparison, coercive and reward power generally demonstrated weaker relationships with the six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Although some of their correlations were statistically significant, their magnitudes were comparatively small.

These findings indicate the importance of examining individual power bases rather than treating principals' use of power as a single undifferentiated construct.

Discussion

The study examined the relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment in public secondary schools in Lahore. The findings revealed a moderate positive relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power ($r = .479$, $p < .001$). This suggests that teachers who perceived themselves as more empowered also tended to report higher levels of principals' use of power.

This finding is important because organizational power is not necessarily experienced exclusively through control or administrative authority. Principals may exercise influence through formal responsibilities, professional knowledge, and interpersonal relationships. These different sources of power may coexist with teachers' professional participation and independence.

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The results are consistent with the broader literature emphasizing the importance of empowering and distributed leadership in supporting teachers' professional experiences. Yao and Ma (2024) identified teacher empowerment as an important mechanism connecting distributed leadership with career satisfaction. Similarly, KasapoğluTankutay and Çolak (2025) reported a positive relationship between principals' empowering leadership and teacher autonomy. The present findings extend this discussion by examining specific social power bases and their associations with individual dimensions of teacher empowerment.

Legitimate Power and Teacher Empowerment

Legitimate power demonstrated positive associations with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Its strongest relationship was with autonomy (r = .368), followed by decision making and impact (r = .333 for both).

These findings suggest that formal organizational authority may coexist with teachers' professional independence and participation. Principals occupy positions that enable them to organize school activities, allocate responsibilities, facilitate consultation, and establish opportunities for teachers to contribute to institutional decisions.

The relationship between legitimate power and autonomy is particularly relevant because it indicates that teachers' professional independence is not necessarily incompatible with the formal authority exercised by school principals. Organizational authority may be associated with opportunities for teachers to exercise appropriate discretion in their professional responsibilities.

The association between legitimate power and professional growth (r = .314) also suggests that principals' formal positions may be relevant to the organization of professional development activities and opportunities for teachers' professional advancement.

These findings are broadly consistent with earlier research examining the relationship between principals' legitimate power and teacher empowerment (Gonzales & Short, 1996; Short & Johnson, 1994).

Expert Power and Teacher Empowerment

Expert power demonstrated positive relationships with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Its strongest relationship was with professional growth (r = .389), followed by self-efficacy (r = .312) and autonomy (r = .302).

The relationship between expert power and professional growth was the strongest dimension-level association identified in the study. This finding highlights the relevance of principals' professional knowledge, experience, and perceived competence to teachers' professional experiences.

Principals recognized for their professional expertise may be better positioned to provide instructional guidance, facilitate professional learning, and support teachers in addressing work-related challenges. Such professional interactions may be associated with teachers' confidence and willingness to exercise independent professional judgment.

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The positive association between expert power and self-efficacy also suggests that principals' perceived professional competence may coexist with teachers' confidence in their own abilities. However, the correlational design does not establish that principals' expertise directly improves teachers' self-efficacy or professional growth.

The findings are consistent with Lintner's (2008) research, which identified expert power as an important source of influence associated with teacher empowerment.

Referent Power and Teacher Empowerment

Referent power demonstrated positive relationships with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment, with its strongest association observed with autonomy ($r = .359$).

This finding suggests that positive interpersonal relationships between principals and teachers may coexist with professional independence. Respect, admiration, and positive professional relationships can contribute to an organizational environment in which teachers feel comfortable exercising professional judgment.

The association between referent power and self-efficacy ($r = .257$) further indicates that interpersonal influence may be relevant to teachers' professional confidence. These findings are broadly consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of trust and psychological empowerment in school leadership (Yalçın et al., 2025).

The results also complement Lintner's (2008) findings concerning the relevance of referent power to teachers perceived empowerment.

Coercive Power and Teacher Empowerment

Coercive power demonstrated comparatively weak positive relationships with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment. Four relationships were statistically significant, whereas the associations with status and autonomy were not.

These findings suggest that the capacity to impose disciplinary measures has a comparatively limited relationship with teachers' perceptions of professional empowerment. Although disciplinary authority may be necessary for maintaining institutional order and organizational expectations, it does not necessarily correspond to greater teacher participation or professional independence.

The comparatively weak associations indicate that reliance on coercive influence should not be equated with the creation of an empowering professional environment.

Reward Power and Teacher Empowerment

Reward power demonstrated relatively small positive relationships with five dimensions of teacher empowerment, while its association with status was negligible and statistically nonsignificant.

These findings suggest that the provision of rewards and recognition may have a limited relationship with teachers' broader perceptions of empowerment. Although rewards can be

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relevant to recognizing performance and encouraging organizational cooperation, they do not necessarily correspond to greater autonomy, decision-making authority, or professional influence.

The findings are broadly consistent with Lintner (2008), who reported that reward power was among the less strongly associated power bases in relation to teacher empowerment.

Overall Interpretation

Taken together, the findings indicate that principals' different power bases have distinct relationships with teachers' professional experiences. Legitimate, expert, and referent power demonstrated comparatively stronger associations with selected dimensions of empowerment, particularly autonomy and professional growth.

The findings also demonstrate that teacher empowerment is multidimensional. Different power bases may be associated with different professional experiences, making it important to examine individual dimensions rather than relying exclusively on an overall empowerment score.

The study contributes to the literature by providing context-specific evidence concerning the relationship between principals' traditional social power bases and teacher empowerment in Pakistani public secondary schools.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment in public secondary schools in Lahore. The findings revealed a moderate positive relationship between overall teacher empowerment and principals' use of power ($r = .479$, $p < .001$).

At the dimensional level, legitimate power demonstrated positive associations with all six dimensions of teacher empowerment, particularly autonomy, decision making, impact, and professional growth. Expert power was positively associated with all six dimensions, with its strongest relationship observed with professional growth. Referent power also demonstrated positive relationships with all six dimensions, particularly autonomy.

In comparison, coercive and reward power demonstrated generally weaker associations with teacher empowerment. Nevertheless, several relationships involving these power bases were statistically significant.

The findings suggest that principals' formal authority, professional expertise, and interpersonal influence are relevant to teachers' perceptions of empowerment. They also indicate that the exercise of organizational power and teachers' professional independence are not necessarily incompatible.

The study contributes to educational leadership research by demonstrating that different power bases are associated with different dimensions of teacher empowerment in Pakistani public secondary schools. Since the research employed a correlational design, the findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal relationships.

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Implications for Educational Practice

The findings offer several implications for school leadership and educational administration.

1. **Encouraging teacher participation:** Principals should provide teachers with meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions concerning instructional practices, school development, and professional responsibilities.
2. **Exercising authority constructively:** Formal authority should be exercised in ways that facilitate consultation, appropriate delegation, and collaborative school management.
3. **Strengthening professional expertise:** Principals should promote professional learning, provide constructive instructional guidance, and facilitate opportunities for teachers to improve their professional competencies.
4. **Supporting professional autonomy:** Teachers should be provided with appropriate discretion in classroom practices, instructional decisions, and professional responsibilities.
5. **Developing respectful relationships:** School leaders should promote professional trust, fairness, approachability, and mutual respect to strengthen positive relationships within schools.
6. **Using coercive power appropriately:** Disciplinary authority should be exercised fairly and proportionately rather than relying primarily on threats or penalties to influence teachers' professional behaviour.

These implications highlight the importance of leadership practices that combine organizational responsibility with professional participation and respect for teachers' judgment.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings.

First, the sample consisted of 400 teachers from 40 public secondary schools in two selected geographical areas of Lahore. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to private schools, other educational levels, or public schools in other districts of Punjab.

Second, the study relied on teachers' self-reported responses. Their perceptions may not fully represent principals' actual leadership practices or the perspectives of other school stakeholders.

Third, the correlational design does not establish causal relationships between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment. Longitudinal or mixed-method studies could provide further insights into how these relationships develop over time.

Fourth, the study used adapted versions of established instruments. Although the reported reliability coefficients indicated satisfactory internal consistency, further examination of the adapted instruments' construct validity and factor structure would strengthen the measurement evidence.

Future research could examine these relationships using larger and more geographically diverse samples. Comparisons between public and private schools could provide further evidence concerning organizational differences in the exercise of principals' power.

Further studies could incorporate principals' perspectives, classroom observations, and qualitative interviews to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how different power bases are experienced by teachers. Researchers may also investigate the roles of organizational trust, school climate, distributed leadership, and professional collaboration in the relationship between principals' power bases and teacher empowerment.

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