Journal of Educational Sciences *(JES)*

Original Article

Spring & Summer, 2026, 33(1), 107-122.
DOI: 10.22055/EDUS.2025.49194.3733

ISSN (E): 2588-672x
https://education.scu.ac.ir/

The Role of Learning-Centered Leadership in Attitudes Toward the Teaching Profession Through Teacher Enthusiasm Among Elementary School Teachers in Kurdistan Province

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Article Info

Received: 18 Apr 2025
Revised: 21 Aug 2025
Accepted: 23 Sep 2025
Published: 20 Apr 2026

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Keywords:
Educational leadership, Attitude Towards the Teaching Profession, Teacher Enthusiasm, Learning-Centered Leadership, Elementary Teachers

Abstract

Learning-centered leadership has increasingly been recognized as an effective leadership approach for enhancing teaching quality and improving teachers' professional experiences. At the same time, teacher enthusiasm has emerged as an important psychological factor influencing teachers' motivation, commitment, and attitudes toward the teaching profession. However, limited research has examined the mechanisms through which learning-centered leadership influences teachers' professional attitudes. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of learning-centered leadership on elementary school teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession, with teacher enthusiasm serving as a mediating variable. The study employed an applied, descriptive-correlational design. The statistical population consisted of 6,328 elementary school teachers in Kurdistan Province during the 2023–2024 academic year. Using Cochran's formula and proportionate stratified random sampling, 362 teachers were selected. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling to examine both direct and indirect relationships among the study variables. The findings indicated that learning-centered leadership had a significant positive effect on teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession and on teacher enthusiasm. Teacher enthusiasm also exerted a significant positive effect on teachers' professional attitudes and partially mediated the relationship between learning-centered leadership and attitudes toward the teaching profession. These findings suggest that school leaders who promote collaborative learning, instructional improvement, and professional development create organizational conditions that enhance teachers' enthusiasm and strengthen positive professional attitudes. The study highlights the importance of adopting learning-centered leadership practices and fostering teacher enthusiasm as complementary strategies for improving teachers' professional commitment, instructional quality, and overall educational effectiveness.

How to Cite: Sadeghi, S., & Ghanbari, S. (2026). The role of learning-centered leadership in attitudes toward the teaching profession through teacher enthusiasm among elementary school teachers in Kurdistan province, *Journal of Educational Sciences (JES)*, *33*(1), 107-122**.** https://doi.org/10.22055/edus.2025.49194.3733 [Persian]

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession are among the most important determinants of instructional effectiveness, professional commitment, and educational quality. Positive professional attitudes contribute to higher motivation, greater job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and improved student learning outcomes. Consequently, identifying organizational and psychological factors that shape teachers' professional attitudes has become an important area of educational research. One organizational factor that has received increasing attention is learning-centered leadership, which emphasizes instructional improvement, collaborative learning, professional development, and the continuous enhancement of teaching practices. Unlike traditional administrative leadership, learning-centered leadership places teaching and learning at the core of school leadership activities. Teacher enthusiasm represents another influential factor associated with instructional effectiveness and professional well-being. Enthusiastic teachers demonstrate greater commitment to teaching, establish stronger relationships with students, and create more engaging classroom environments. Although previous studies have independently examined learning-centered leadership and teacher enthusiasm, limited evidence exists regarding the mediating role of teacher enthusiasm in explaining how leadership influences teachers' attitudes toward their profession. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate the direct and indirect effects of learning-centered leadership on elementary school teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession through the mediating role of teacher enthusiasm.

Method

This study employed an applied quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational approach. The statistical population consisted of all elementary school teachers in Kurdistan Province during the 2023–2024 academic year (N = 6,328). The required sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, resulting in a final sample of 362 teachers. Participants were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure appropriate representation across different cities within the province. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires measuring learning-centered leadership, teacher enthusiasm, and teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession. The psychometric properties of the instruments were evaluated prior to hypothesis testing, including assessments of validity and reliability. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships among the study variables. Path coefficients were estimated to evaluate both the direct influence of learning-centered leadership and the mediating role of teacher enthusiasm.

Results

The structural model demonstrated satisfactory overall fit and supported the proposed theoretical relationships. Learning-centered leadership exerted a significant positive effect on teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession ($\beta = 0.291$, $p < .01$). It also had a substantial positive effect on teacher enthusiasm ($\beta = 0.496$, $p < .01$), indicating that schools characterized by stronger learning-centered leadership tend to foster higher levels of enthusiasm among teachers. Teacher enthusiasm was found to positively predict teachers' professional attitudes ($\beta = 0.369$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of learning-centered leadership on teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession through teacher enthusiasm ($\beta = 0.183$, $p < .01$). These findings indicate that teacher enthusiasm serves as an important psychological mechanism through which leadership practices influence teachers'

professional perceptions. Overall, the results suggest that learning-centered leadership contributes to more favorable professional attitudes both directly and indirectly by strengthening teachers' enthusiasm for teaching.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings underscore the importance of integrating organizational leadership and teacher-related psychological factors in understanding teachers' professional attitudes. Learning-centered leadership creates supportive instructional environments by encouraging collaboration, professional learning, shared decision-making, and continuous instructional improvement. Such organizational conditions appear to enhance teachers' enthusiasm, which in turn strengthens their commitment and positive attitudes toward the teaching profession. The mediating role of teacher enthusiasm suggests that effective leadership does not influence teachers' professional attitudes solely through administrative practices but also by fostering positive emotional engagement with teaching. This finding emphasizes the importance of considering both organizational and motivational processes when developing strategies to improve teacher effectiveness and professional well-being. From a practical perspective, educational authorities and school principals should promote learning-centered leadership by supporting professional learning communities, encouraging instructional collaboration, providing meaningful professional development opportunities, and creating school climates that sustain teachers' enthusiasm. Such initiatives may strengthen teachers' professional identity, improve instructional quality, and contribute to more effective educational outcomes. Overall, this study extends the literature on educational leadership by demonstrating that teacher enthusiasm functions as an important mediating mechanism linking learning-centered leadership to teachers' professional attitudes. Future studies are encouraged to examine additional psychological mediators and organizational variables across different educational contexts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' professional well-being.

Author Contributions: Author 1 was responsible for leading the overall research process. Author 2 was responsible for research plan design, data collection and analysis and all authors discussed the results, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank all dear teachers who have helped us in this research.

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare there is no conflict of interest in this article.

Funding: This research is not sponsored by any institution and all costs have been borne by the authors

Data Availability Statement: The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement: During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used DeepSeek solely to improve the readability and language of the manuscript. After using the tool, the authors carefully reviewed and edited the content and take full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript**.**

Ethical Approval: All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.