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Expatriate Educators' Perspectives of Transformational Leadership Practices in International Schools in Kuwait

Stacey Howe
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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Stacey Howe

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Expatriate Educators' Perspectives of Transformational Leadership Practices in

International Schools in Kuwait

by

Stacey Howe

MA, Central Connecticut State University, 2014

BS, University of the West Indies, Mona, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2025

Abstract

Effective leadership is crucial for educational success, yet its definition varies across cultures, which may cause communication issues, especially in culturally diverse environments like international schools. The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore differing perceptions of transformational leadership (TL) between 68 expatriate teachers and 27 administrators, representing response rates of 22% and 47%, respectively, in three Kuwait international schools. Grounded in Bass's TL theory, the Global Transformational Leadership survey, an anonymous online survey with each of seven leadership domains represented by one item, was used in the study. Data collected on a 5-point frequency scale were analyzed using independent samples *t* tests to identify significant differences in perceptions of TL between the two groups. Administrators rated the frequency of their TL practices significantly higher than teachers on all seven domains ($p = .03$ for vision, $p < .001$ for total and other domains: staff development, support system, staff empowerment, guide to innovation, exemplary practices, and possessing charisma), with Cohen's *d* ranging from .50 to 1.05. These results suggest that while administrators viewed their leadership practices as strongly transformational, teachers perceived a much lower level of TL in practice. This discrepancy points to a potential communication gap that may affect staff morale, trust, and school climate. By identifying these differing viewpoints, this study may lead to changes that enhance teacher retention and educational outcomes, contributing to positive social change within international education in Kuwait.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter Mia Heywood, my late Mother Lolie Howe “Mum,” my friends, and my supportive siblings. Thank you for your resolute support throughout this process. My Mother had a special love for education. She encouraged and supported my educational achievement at every level. Her mantra was “strive for the highest level in whatever you do. Put God first in everything you do. He will carry you through.” I believe she would be proud of my efforts. To my friends and siblings, for their continued encouragement throughout this process. Many months the comments from my siblings were “I am praying for you my sister” or “when will you complete?” “Continue to do your best.” To my daughter, who has always supported me through all my endeavors and for over 5 years has sacrificed time with me while I committed to nights of endless research. You stayed up for long hours and listened to my complaints about the many challenges I faced with finding articles and my time limit for completing given assignments. Mia, you are the reason I strive for excellence in everything I do. I can only hope that the legacy I leave will make you proud to be my daughter. I am dedicating this dissertation to every person who has faced many challenges in their lives and overcome them. Never give up!

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Profound appreciation goes to my family, friends and particularly my daughter Mia. The constant question, “Are you doing your studies?” whenever I was on the computer will continue to resonate in my mind. I thank her for her words of encouragement and understanding which helped me stay on track. There were many sacrifices that had to be made; Mia sacrificed through the process with me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The study of leadership is an ongoing phenomenon that has dominated many sectors (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Endres & Weibler, 2020; Northouse, 2021; Raelin, 2020). Leadership is one of the most vital matters in human resource management (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021). Like many other sectors with varying systems, the educational sector is complex and requires effective leadership for success. Northouse (2021) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). In education, there are many different leadership approaches. Some of these include distributed, collaborative, instructional, transactional, and transformational leadership styles (Antonopoulou et al., 2020; Cobbinah & Agyemang, 2019). Distributed leadership ensures that responsibilities and duties are delegated to other members of the team (Fourie & Naidoo, 2022), whereas collaborative leadership promotes teamwork (Aurora Bernardo et al., 2019; Cobbinah & Agyemang, 2019). Instructional leadership focuses on the overall teaching and learning environment (Cobbinah & Agyemang, 2019). The instructional leader has multiple roles in the organization. These roles include managing programs and providing a learning environment conducive for learning in which key stakeholders collaborate to improve effective delivery of the curriculum (Naz & Rashid, 2021).

Teachers' development in curriculum and instructional methods are supported by their leaders (Cobbinah & Agyemang, 2019) through the provision of professional learning opportunities including seminars and workshops as well as assigning curriculum instruction coaches to support teachers' ongoing professional development (Aljassar &

Altammar, 2020). Transactional leadership style involves rewarding followers based on successful results (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership involves interaction among stakeholders enabling changes to the educational institution (Bass, 1995; Cobbinah & Agyemang, 2019; Lai et al., 2020; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of authentic and ethical leadership, emphasizing communication between leaders and followers. The transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1995) involves active engagement among leaders and followers that affects motivation in an organization. Bass and Avolio (1994) noted transformational leadership practices are popular because the theory accentuates inherent inspiration and growth of employees. Transformational leadership approaches not only motivate personnel towards a unified vision but also facilitate positive changes, culminating in the attainment of educational excellence (Mafe, 2023). Bass noted transformational leadership is comprised of individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charismatic/inspiring leadership. Transformative leaders understand the desires, aptitude, and ambitions of their supporters (Bass, 1995) that can directly influence the work attitude, commitment, and overall performance of their staff.

In education, transformational leadership practice is prevalent. Teachers relate transformational school leadership to the attitudes and commitment shown by their leaders towards their jobs. The more transformational leadership elements are employed by an administrator, the more committed and motivated teachers feel about their job (Thomas et al., 2020).

Several researchers have focused on the use of transformational leadership within the educational systems of various countries (e.g., Abdul Halim et al., 2021: Malaysia; Akar & Ustuner, 2019: Turkey; Gkolia et al., 2018: Greece; Gyensare et al., 2016: Ghana; Khumalo, 2019: South Africa; Qamar et al., 2019: India; Sezgin et al., 2024: Turkey; Windasari et al., 2025: Indonesia). I examined transformational leadership practices in Kuwait, specifically, expatriate educators' perspectives of transformational leadership practices in international schools in Kuwait. In this study, I addressed a gap in educational practice by assessing whether the use of transformational leadership practices was viewed differently by expatriate teachers and administrators. The transformational leadership model is often used in national and international schools in Kuwait (Almonawer, 2021; Almonawer et al., 2023); however, how the use of the model in international schools in Kuwait is viewed by teachers and administrators has received little attention from researchers.

The potential positive social change implications of this study may include academic discussions among superintendents and administrators in Kuwait international schools about enhancing leadership programs as well as examining different views of leadership practices and their influence on expatriate teachers' decisions to remain at their current schools or to leave. In the remainder of this chapter, I present the background of the topic, identify the problem, the purpose, research question (RQ) and hypotheses, and discuss the nature of the study. I also provide an overview of the theoretical framework, which is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Background

Retaining skilled teachers is an ongoing concern because factors such as school culture, location, salary, and personal and professional conditions affect whether teachers choose to remain employed at their current school or leave (Arthur & Bradley, 2023; Kamrath & Bradford, 2020; Koerber et al., 2023).

Retaining educators is among the many educational challenges in Kuwait (Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2023; Arab Times, 2024a, 2024b; KuwaitMate, 2024). The governing body for the education sector in Kuwait has established several educational initiatives in support of the challenges faced by the sector (Alazmi & Hammad, 2023; Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2023; Al Shammari, 2024). Related to these initiatives, principals in Kuwaiti schools were found to have favorable views on the use of transformational leadership practices (Ajonbadi et al., 2023; Almonawer et al., 2023). Because transformational leadership enables followers to take authority over their jobs while growing and shaping success in the workplace (Aziz et al., 2024; Nurrizayani et al., 2024), transformational leadership practices may increase school effectiveness and teachers' motivation (Sianipar, 2024) by creating a positive change in employees who then act as a team and work towards achievement of the goals of the organization (Cansoy, 2020). When the organizational context of schools is strengthened through practices like those of transformational leadership, teachers are more likely to continue working at their schools, and students' performance increases at a faster rate (Alzoraiki et al., 2024).

A seldom researched area is how use of the transformational leadership model in international schools in Kuwait may affect teacher retention (see Ajonbadi et al., 2023;

Almonawer, 2021). International teacher retention is challenging because there are many factors that affect whether teachers remain employed at their current school (Dos Santos, 2019; Ismail & David, 2024). One such factor that has not been addressed in the literature is the differences in the perspectives of expatriate educators on the use of transformational leadership practices in international schools in Kuwait.

In this study, I addressed a gap in practice by focusing on the perspectives of expatriate administrators and teachers regarding transformational leadership practices in international schools in Kuwait. The findings from the study may be used by Kuwaiti superintendents to further enhance leadership development programs at their schools, which may result in positive social change through increased teacher retention.

Problem Statement

Kuwait's educational sector is faced with shortage of qualified educators (Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2023; Arab Times, 2024a, 2024b, KuwaitMate, 2024), which accentuates the need to retain teachers. Teachers' loyalty and satisfaction with their jobs are shown to relate to the use of transformational leadership practices (Kouni et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2020). However, if administrators do not successfully implement transformational leadership practices, or teachers do not view the leadership practices the same, the benefits of transformational leadership on teacher retention may not occur. The problem I addressed with this study was whether expatriate teachers and administrators in international schools in Kuwait view the practice of transformational leadership similarly or differently.

In addition to the international studies noted earlier, researchers explored transformational leadership practices in various countries (e.g., Asad et al., 2022: Pakistan; Firmansyah et al., 2022: Asia; Shava & Heystek, 2021; Khumalo, 2019: South Africa; Ahmed & Al Amiri, 2022: United Arab Emirates; Li, 2022; Liu, 2015: China; Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021: Qatar; Sezgin et al., 2024: Turkey), but few studies were found that addressed the issue of low international teacher retention in Kuwait (Al-Ghanim, 2023), and none assessed differences in the viewpoints of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices, the research problem to be addressed by this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there were differences between the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices in three international schools in Kuwait. The Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) survey (Carless et al., 2000) was used to collect data from administrators and teachers. The GTL survey measures the qualities of a transformational leader based on the domains of vision, staff development, support system, staff empowerment, guide to innovation, exemplary practices, and possessing charisma (Carless et al., 2000). I used a cross-sectional survey approach (see Cvetkovic-Vega et al., 2021; Hall, 2008) to gather quantitative data for the causal comparative design (see Fulmer, 2018; Ghanad, 2023). Analyses comparing the GTL survey responses (dependent variable) of expatriate teachers and administrators (two levels of the

independent variable) may lead to a better understanding of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Transformational leadership practices may influence expatriate teacher retention in Kuwait in unexpected ways if expatriate teachers and administrators view the use of transformational leadership practices differently. The RQ and hypotheses that guided this study are as follows:

RQ: What are the differences, if any, between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives regarding the use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools?

H_0 : There are no significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

H_a : There are significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

Theoretical Foundation

The framework for this study is based on transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1995; Burns, 1978). *Transformational leadership* refers to the process in which leaders create measurable change by cultivating trust, loyalty, respect, and shared goals to

engage and encourage followers to improve an organization's performance (Burns, 1978; Usman, 2020). Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership, stating that it occurs when collaboration between leaders and staff members inspire to greater standards of trust and motivation. Burns held the opinion that a strong vision and charisma motivate followers to work together to promote success. Later, Bass (1995) expanded on this idea by examining the power that followers have, arguing that for leaders to be transformative, they must command the respect and trust of staff; and actively engage and motivate them. Bass demonstrated that transformational leaders mobilize employees to go beyond expectations, which can lead to inventiveness and efficiency, thus defining transformational leaders as those who motivate, raise expectation levels, increase individuals' need for self-actualization, and promote team or organization interest. Bass identified transformational leadership practices as key elements associated with the success of an organization. The framework for transformational leadership is grounded in "idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration" (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 112).

Evidence suggests that transformational leadership practices contribute to motivation and commitment (Lee & Kuo, 2019; Udin, 2020), low employee turnover (Gan & Voon, 2021), teacher well-being (Meidelina et al., 2023; Van der Vyver et al., 2020), and job satisfaction (Setyaningsih & Sunaryo, 2021). Transformational leadership practices foster and inspire changes, which enhance social and ethical levels in workers (Bass, 1995; Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership creates measurable change by fostering trust and engaging followers to improve the organization's performance (Burns,

1978). Furthermore, transformational leadership can be learned and has been the focus of management training in business (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Hannah et al., 2020) and education (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Bellibaş et al., 2021; Prestiadi et al., 2020). An expanded discussion of transformational leadership theory is addressed in Chapter 2.

In developing the methodology for this study, I was guided by Bass's transformational leadership theory, which outlines the characteristics of a transformational leader. The GTL survey is aligned with the transformational leadership model with questions designed to ascertain responses to assess transformational leader behaviours' (Carless et al., 2000) from the perspectives of teachers and administrators, which addressed the RQ.

Nature of the Study

I employed a cross-sectional survey method (see Cvetkovic-Vega et al., 2021; Hall, 2008) to collect the quantitative data for the causal comparative design (see Fulmer, 2018; Ghanad, 2023) of this study. This design allowed me to understand the nature of the variables by comparison, not manipulation. Quantitative research involves generating and testing hypotheses (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ghanad, 2023); this is consistent with comparing expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives of transformational leadership practices.

The sampling frame of individuals selected to receive invitations to participate in the anonymous online survey included 494 expatriate educators, 436 expatriate teachers and 58 expatriate administrators (principal and assistant principal at each of the three

schools), who have been working at their international schools in Kuwait for at least 1 year. The GTL survey (see Appendix A), the data collection instrument, includes seven items, one for each leadership domain, with a 5-point scale response format ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently, if not always*) to assess transformational leader behaviors (Carless et al., 2000). Following the method used by the survey developers, item values were summed for an overall score (dependent variable). The data collected were analyzed using SPSS software to conduct independent *t* tests that were used to compare teachers' and administrators' (two levels of the independent variable) group means and determine whether to reject or not reject the null hypotheses based on a criterion of $p < .05$ for rejection. Additional descriptive analyses were conducted to clarify the nature of the data.

Definitions

The following terms and definitions inform the study:

Expatriate administrators: Educational leaders working in different countries other than their own (Aydin et al., 2019).

Expatriate teachers: Educators who have migrated to teach in countries other than their own (Bright & Heyting, 2024). Expatriate teachers are employed by international schools to teach in the host countries, usually with contractual agreements (Alabdulkarim et al., 2023).

International school: Provides nontraditional educational services on a for-profit basis, usually for local and international students who live in the country (Pearce, 2023). International schools implement and follow national English curriculum (Pearce, 2023) usually accredited through international education authorities such as the Council of

International Schools, International Baccalaureate, or Middle States Association of Colleges.

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that are presumed to be true but have not been validated (Creswell, 2014). According to Nkwake (2020), it is critical to be explicit with assumptions and to adequately describe the phenomenon under discussion. Assumptions must be made and, to the extent possible, verified as accurate because false assumptions will invalidate the research (Nkwake, 2020).

Several assumptions were made for this study, including that the teachers and administrators were able to accurately assess leadership behaviors and that all questions were answered correctly to the best of participants' abilities. It was also assumed that the criteria for participation for both administrators and teachers resulted in appropriately selected participants for the topic of the study with no conflicts of interest or potential for personal advantage.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study involves expatriate teachers' and administrators' perspectives of transformational leadership practices in international schools in Kuwait as measured by the GTL survey. This study was delimited to only expatriate K-12 schoolteachers and administrators (principals and assistant principals) in international schools in Kuwait. Local educators from public schools in Kuwait were not included. Expatriate educators who worked less than a year in the international schools in Kuwait were not chosen to participate. The study was also delimited by the international schools

chosen (English language schools) rather than other international schools in Kuwait such as Pakistani, Indian, and German schools.

There were several theories that were not investigated in this study. For example, although Herzberg's (1987) motivation-hygiene theory of employee satisfaction has been used in studies of teacher retention, it was not chosen because this study is not focused on factors of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Other theories of leadership were also not deemed appropriate such as distributed leadership where the focus is on shared decision-making and delegation rather than the visionary and inspiring role of transformational leaders (Nadeem, 2024); collaborative leadership, which focuses on teamwork and shared governance, whereas transformational leadership is about inspiring and elevating individual performance; instructional leadership is primarily concerned with student outcomes and curriculum development, while transformational leadership is broader, encompassing motivation and vision; and transactional leadership operates on reward-and-punishment mechanisms, in contrast to the focus of transformational leadership on intrinsic motivation and long-term change (Samodien et al., 2024). Transformational leadership theory was chosen to ground this study because this model was implemented throughout international schools in Kuwait. The focus of this study was the perspectives of expatriate administrators and teachers in Kuwait. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be applicable to educators employed in other schools and countries.

Limitations

Limitations of this study may affect the generalizability or the application of the findings to practice. These limitations are related to the design and methodology of the

study. First, the participants were volunteers; the respondents may not be representative of the populations of individuals from ethnically diverse Western countries who are working in Kuwait international schools. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to teachers and administrators in different geographic locations. To attempt to address this limitation, expatriate elementary teachers and administrators of various nationalities working in international schools in Kuwait were sent invitations to participate in the study. Another limitation could be the lack of response from teachers and administrators who chose not to participate. As the survey link was distributed through email, a limitation may be the willingness of potential participants to take the initiative to read the email and answer the survey. Although email is now a common tool for individuals due to accessibility (Singh & Sagar, 2021), there may be little incentive for potential participants to respond if they are not interested in the topic of the research. A follow-up email invitation was sent one week after the first invitation to attempt to increase the number of participants. Potential biases in the study have been mitigated by using an anonymous survey to collect the data.

Significance

This study addressed a gap in knowledge and educational practice by assessing whether the use of transformational leadership practices was viewed differently by expatriate teachers and administrators. The transformational leadership model is widely used in schools in Kuwait (Ajonbadi et al., 2023; Almonawer, 2021); however, whether transformational leadership practices are viewed similarly by teachers and administrators has not been sufficiently addressed. Although transformational leadership practices

positively influence teacher retention (Van der Vyver et al., 2020), this effect may vary if the practices are viewed differently by administrators and teachers. The potential implications for positive social change may include discussions among educational leaders about effective leadership practices and the influence these practices may have on staff longevity. Educational leaders may also use the findings from the study to enhance professional development programs that may positively influence the overall school culture. When schools implement effective leadership practices, the learning atmosphere improves, including the overall socio-emotional wellbeing of stakeholders along with students' academic achievement (Velarde et al., 2020; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023).

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the problem of possible differences in expatriate educators' perspectives of transformational leadership practices in three international schools in Kuwait and provided an overview of the theoretical framework based on Bass's (1995) transformational leadership theory. This topic of possible differences in educators' perspectives represents a gap in educational studies that needs to be addressed because possible differences in the ways transformational leadership practices are perceived by administrators and teachers creates a gap in practice. These differences could influence teacher retention in Kuwait where teacher retention has been an increasing concern. Chapter 2 outlines the literature search strategies used and explores the theoretical foundation along with key research findings related to use of the transformational leadership model.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem I addressed by this study was whether expatriate teachers and administrators in international schools in Kuwait view the application of transformational leadership practices differently. If administrators' and teachers' views of employing transformational leadership practices are not similar, then these practices are not likely to positively affect teacher retention in Kuwait, where employing and retaining trained educators is a challenge (Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2023; Arab Times, 2024a, 2024b). Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there were differences between the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices in three international schools in Kuwait.

The literature points to administrative leadership support and style (Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2023; Dos Santos, 2019) as one of the primary factors associated with teacher retention in international schools, along with location and employment package (See et al., 2020), school culture (Räsänen et al., 2020) and personal conditions (Räsänen et al., 2020). Although previous research has focused on transformational leadership in various countries, few studies were found that addressed the issue of low teacher retention in Kuwait, and none assessed the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices. This gap in literature was reflected in a gap in practice; both form the basis for the present study.

Transformational leadership serves as the foundation of the vision of the institution and followers are urged to work toward a better future for the organization and to dedicate themselves to achieving the objectives from the vision (Bakker et al., 2023;

Bass & Avolio, 1994; Suryadi et al., 2024). The vision, however, may not always be shared and occasionally has an unfavorable effect. The unfavorable effect may lead to lack of teachers' commitment to remain employed at the school, which may negatively affect students' academic performance (Gibbons et al., 2021). James and Wyckoff (2020) noted that teacher turnover affects students' academic performance both positively and negatively. The authors noted that low teacher turnover had a positive effect on students' academic achievement when compared to high teacher turnover, which negatively affected students' achievement. Transformational leadership practices implemented in schools enhance the educators' dedication and motivation. (Abdul Halim et al., 2021; Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Mugizi et al., 2019; Sezgin et al., 2024). Enhancing a teacher's feeling of purpose, self-determination, competence, and reducing teacher burnout are all benefits of transformational leadership (Marwani et al., 2024; Tsang et al., 2022).

This chapter provides a discussion of research related to educators' perspectives of transformational leadership practices, when available, referring to schools in Kuwait and other global international schools, starting with the overview of the strategy employed for the literature search, followed by an examination of the theoretical framework, Bass's (1995) theory of transformational leadership. I also provide a review of relevant studies, including a discussion of the Kuwait educational system, expatriate teachers and administrators, teacher retention, and transformational leadership practice.

Literature Search Strategy

I searched the literature to find current, relevant research using the following databases: Education Research Complete, Educational Resource Information Center

(ERIC), Academic Search Premier, Sage Journals, ProCentral, ProQuest, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Science Direct, and Google Scholar through the Walden University Library.

I used Boolean phrases to combine key words including *expatriate teachers*, *international schools*, *Kuwait*, *transformational leadership*, *teacher retention/attrition*, *Kuwait education*, *types of leadership*, *individual consideration*, *intellectual stimulation*, *idealized/charismatic influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *vision*, *staff development*, *supportive leadership*, *empowerment*, *innovative*, *lateral thinking*, and *charismatic leadership*. Sources containing extensive information on various subjects were classified into different categories. This inquiry yielded over 250 references. References were discarded if they were identified as secondary sources or if they did not meet the requisite criteria. Searches were limited to sources published between 2019 and 2025 in the English language, and in peer-reviewed journals, except for classic and seminal studies. There was little research conducted in Kuwait about perceptions of transformational leadership and how the use of these leadership practices affects teacher retention. To provide a broad view of research pertaining to the topic, research about Middle Eastern countries, Asian countries, and Western countries was included in the review. These geographic areas are the home countries of the expatriate administrators and teachers who were invited to participate in the study. Studies from these countries reflect native perspectives and are therefore deemed appropriate sources for this study.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Bass's (1995) transformational leadership theory. Burns (1978) studied political figures to create the concept of transformational leadership and viewed the model as a process rather than a particular activity. Burns identified transformational leaders as individuals who motivate people to act on substantial and fundamental change while appealing to higher ideals and ethical beliefs (Burns, 1978). Bass expanded Burns' research and introduced transformational leadership to corporate organizations by fusing political science and organizational psychology. Bass noted an active interaction among leaders and followers as a factor in organizational motivation and demonstrated that "transformational leaders can motivate employees to go far beyond expectations, resulting in creativity and efficiency" (p. 469).

Bass and Avolio (1994) theorized that the features of a transformational leader include four dimensions, "individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized/charismatic influence, and inspirational motivation" (p. 112). *Individual consideration* is a critical aspect of the transformational process because a leader must establish personal relationships through effective communication that enables the leaders to assess each employee for areas of strength. Individual consideration allows the followers to feel their contributions are recognized, and their efforts add value to the overall organizational success (Bass, 1995). Leaders who embody individual consideration prioritize the primary problems of their followers and show kindness while respecting their concerns (Khan et al., 2022).

Intellectual stimulation refers to transformational leaders inspiring their employees through encouragement and support. Leaders encourage their employees to express their creativity in their activities and followers are expected to contribute to problem solving and the implementation of new ideas (Khan et al., 2022). Purwanto (2020) noted an association exists between intellectual stimulation and job fulfillment in an organization.

Idealized/charismatic influence is the ability for leaders to positively motivate others (Bass, 1995). Leaders use their professional practices, decorum, and gestures to model expected behaviors for others to imitate. Charismatic leaders are bound by their words; trust is a major factor supporting inspiration. The idealized influence of transformational leadership involves endorsing high ethical principles and truth that rouses “employees to work towards the goals of the organization” (Bass, 1995, p. 471), which according to Purwanto (2020), has a positive effect on workplace wellbeing.

Inspirational motivation is the means used by a transformational leader to “inspire staff loyalty and move them to achieve common goals” (Bass, 1995, p. 471). Communication and interaction are important in the organization and the leader must seek to develop a work culture that inspires togetherness. Hence, employees will embrace the organization's vision and mission through common interests because they experience a sense of belonging (Khan et al., 2022).

Transformational leadership encourages leaders to lead by example, inspiring subordinates to do the same (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Soim, 2024) through direct participation between leaders and followers, which has an influence on organizational

motivation (Bass, 1995; Frihastama & Hermanto, 2022). Transformational leaders positively support the learning environment, which contributes to the overall growth of the institution (Kilag et al., 2024). Additionally, Almonawer et al. (2023) noted that the stimulating effect of transformational leadership aroused the interest of both leaders and followers, resulting in positive changes in institutions.

In the current research, transformational leadership theory is used to examine the viewpoints of expatriate educators regarding implementation of the transformational leadership approach in their schools. The theory has been implemented in a range of educational and business contexts with positive results of commitment, job satisfaction, and retention (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Eliyana & Ma'arif, 2019; Elshaer et al., 2022; Lee & Kuo, 2019; Sliwka et al., 2024; Usman, 2020).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Kuwait Educational System

Kuwait is a high-income Middle Eastern country. The population of Kuwait is estimated at 4.2 million (Central Statistical Bureau, 2020). Kuwaitis comprise about a third of the country's population and the rest are expatriates. The educational system includes both international (585 private) and government (653 public) schools (Oxford Business Group, 2019). All public schools are gender segregated and free of cost. Most of the private schools are gender segregated; only a few of the private schools are coeducational. The school system in Kuwait extends from elementary to secondary levels (National Center for Education Development, 2024). Although Kuwait succeeded in providing free education to all Kuwaitis at the elementary and intermediate levels in

public schools, most Kuwaiti residents choose international schools which offer private education for their children.

The school structure is centralized, with the Minister of Education serving as the decision-maker for national education (National Center for Education Development, 2024). Worldwide reports and literature on the education system in Kuwait have stressed the lack of quality in the system (Alhashem & Alhouti, 2021; Fattahova, 2014; Winokur, 2014). The lack of quality of the educational system has been acknowledged with respect to the content, curriculum, instructors and their teaching abilities, management of educational institutions and their leadership competencies, as well as the caliber of the school environment (Alhashem & Alhouti, 2021). Education has become a priority for the government; the development of human capital is important to the growth and progress of the country (Mihaylova et al., 2020).

International Schools

Bunnell and Poole (2021) noted that international schools support education within a global context and can be defined by an organization made of a body of students and staff from different nationalities, engaging in a curriculum that is geared towards global studies. International schools use a nonlocal curriculum usually delivered in English outside English speaking countries (Bunnell & Poole, 2021). These schools are usually operated commercially, may be organized into chains, and managed as for-profit international schools (Bunnell & Poole, 2021).

Expatriate Teachers

Many industries have been affected by advances in information technology and communication; many individuals are opting to work outside of their own countries and be immersed in different cultures (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The education sector is one of the areas where there is a high rate of employment of international personnel (Aydin et al., 2019). Teachers who work outside their countries in educational institutions are referred to as *expatriates or expats* (Bunnell & Poole, 2022). Over 70,000 expatriate teachers are expected to be employed worldwide by the year 2026 (Bunnell, 2017). An expatriate status can be defined as either organizational or self-initiated. Self-initiated educators opt to work in foreign countries or oversees on their own, whereas organizational expats are educators who are sent by their organization to exchange techniques and aid in development (Brewster et al., 2021; Davies et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2025). An expatriate's reasons for working in another country vary from better wages and working conditions to exploring new places or facilitating their professional and personal growth. According to Tahir (2021), *Western expatriates* are those who are citizens of or have strong ties to Anglo-Saxon nations like Australia, New Zealand, England, and the United States of America.

Expatriate Administrators

An *expatriate administrator* is a person who has citizenship in at least one country but works and resides in another as the leader or the most influential individual in a K–12 institution (Grissom et al., 2021). Expatriate administrators' jobs entail managing expatriates (Selmer, 2019); handling the cultural sensitivity of that country, and

endorsing fair acceptance of those they work with (Li et al., 2024). Expatriates who live away from home have a wide range of experiences. Many expatriates live abroad for a limited time with the intention of returning to their home of origin while some expats never return to their country of citizenship. Foreign managers are faced with cross-cultural obstacles ranging from language and communication barriers to leadership issues (Selmer, 2019). It is expected that Western expatriates will experience significant cultural contrasts from the atmosphere in their native country when living and working in the Middle East. These contrasts may create a challenging work environment, raising the possibility of failure for Western expatriates (Tahir, 2021).

Teacher Retention in International Schools

According to Dos Santos (2019), teacher turnover and retention is challenging for international schools; the high incidence of teacher turnover (Bunnell & Poole, 2021) is a major concern for international education administrators (Tran & Smith, 2020). Mahboob et al., (2017) noted that the countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council experienced various “challenges in education in the region ranging from staff, curriculum, students and other social entities” (p. 13). In response, policy makers in Kuwait and the other Gulf Cooperation Council countries shifted resources to improve education with emphasis placed on principals’ leadership practices and retention of qualified teachers (Al-Mahdy & Emam, 2017; Al-Mahdy et al., 2018). However, in recent years, increased interest in Middle East countries resulted in an influx of foreign businesses with their workers, many having children of school age, which has renewed the issue of teacher shortages (George, 2023, 2024) as reported for Kuwait (Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2023), Saudi Arabia

(Pacino & Qureshi, 2021), United Arab Emirates (Murdock, 2022); and Oman (Al Sulaimi & bin Jantan, 2024).

Research on teacher turnover addresses how factors like teachers' demographics influence the decisions to remain in their current educational institutions or move to different locations (Redding & Nguyen, 2020). Alkhateri et al. (2018) found that assistance provided by the principal's supervision improved teacher retention. Teachers' motivation and the administrator's transformational leadership practice are highly connected (Abdullah et al., 2018; Wilson Heenan et al., 2023). Megawaty et al. (2022) posited that leadership styles and values are connected to achieving goals and an emphasis on employees' efforts and goal achievement encourages a higher level of personal motivation and employee commitment. Aspects of elementary school principals' transformational leadership predicted teachers' overall job motivation (Lee & Kuo, 2019; Madjid & Samsudin, 2021). Researchers report that satisfaction at the workplace and work engagement are associated with transformative leadership practices (Ahmad Saifuddin, 2020; Megawaty et al., 2022; Purwanto et al., 2021; Sezgin et al., 2024).

Transformational Leadership

Practitioners and other professionals used transformational leadership strategies to inspire employees to exceed the expectations of their workplace (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) noted transformational leadership practices are associated with organizational success. Following on its success elsewhere, the practice of transformational leadership has been applied in many educational contexts (Litz & Blaik-Hourani, 2020)). According to Lee and Kuo (2019), transformational leadership among elementary school

administrators predicted teachers' overall levels of work motivation. Teachers were more motivated to work hard when they received greater levels of intellectual stimulation and individualized attention (Lee & Kuo, 2019). Veraya (2020) affirmed that headmasters' transformative leadership style has a positive effect on commitment to the organization as well as employees' sense of belonging and fulfillment. In a study by Akar and Ustuner (2019) teachers' views on school administrators' transformative leadership strategies directly affected their perceptions of overall quality of work life.

Transformational Leadership Behaviors

Bass (1995) was among several researchers who studied transformational leadership behaviors after the theory was originally presented (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Tichy & Devanna, 1986) and others more recently (Asbari, 2020; Deng et al., 2023; Lai et al., 2020; Qalati et al., 2022), each offering their own perspective, developing similar instruments, and modifying the terms used to describe transformational leadership behaviors. Bass (1995) developed the “*Four P*” dimensions used to measure transformational leadership which include “individual consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation” (p. 471).

Podsakoff et al. (1990) outlined six transformational leadership behaviors and compared them to the existing models used by other researchers (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1995; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). “Identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, providing individualized support to staff, and intellectual stimulation” (Podsakoff et al., 1990, p. 112), were key components of the original researchers' dimensions that summarized

transformational leadership. These six leadership behaviors were included by Carless et al. (2000) in developing their GTL survey, which was used in this study to measure seven transformational leadership qualities, including charisma, which had been noted previously by Bass (1995). The transformational leadership domains, as identified by Carless et al. (2000) were “vision, staff development, supportive leadership, empowerment, innovative, leads by example, and charismatic” (p. 360). Each of these transformational leadership behaviors/domains has received some attention from researchers.

Vision

Vision is having clear ideas or goals that are long-term, useful, and realistic for followers and the system they are a part of (Pitler, 2024). Transformational leaders create and communicate a set of principles in the form of a vision. These ideals are clearly expressed, and employees use the guided principles to work towards the expected vision (Carless et al., 2000; Pitler, 2024). Employee attraction to the purpose of the organization is subsequently increased by this vision (Rohmad et al., 2024; Sukatin et al., 2022), which is ultimately predicted to have a positive influence on performance because employees devote more time and effort to objectives they find meaningful and significant (Suryadi et al., 2024).

The transformational leader should “communicate the organization’s vision in a clear, consistent manner” (Khan et al., 2020, p. 2) and is responsible for implementing significant changes through objective incentives and rewards. It is therefore important for transformational leaders to become visionaries. Visionaries possess clear goals and plans

for their teams, departments, and organizations (Al Ajmi, 2024). They possess intelligence, expertise, and knowledge in their subject so that the followers can clearly see and understand that the vision is desirable and can be beneficial to them (Al Ajmi, 2024; Lumbantobing & Ashlan, 2023). Thus, visionary leaders give staff members the technical guidance and specific objectives they need to accomplish the organization's goals (Zohriah et al., 2022).

Staff Development

Successful leaders encourage and support the personal development of their staff (Bass, 1985; Bellibaş et al., 2021). Transformational leaders identify each employee's abilities and offer advice, support, and encouragement for personal growth. In education, transformational leaders have an impact on the professional practices of their teachers and can enable their employees to grow as leaders (Hilel & Ramírez-García, 2022; Tran et al., 2024). Kalman et al. (2022) posited that teacher professional development enhances teacher quality. Shoshani and Eldor (2016) noted that creating a learning environment throughout the school can improve motivation and well-being of teachers (Augustine & Rebekah, 2024). A learning environment that offers opportunities for employees to continue to learn and grow encourages employees to work towards a collective vision (Bellibaş et al., 2021).

Supportive Leadership

Supportive leaders enhance employee resources and greatly affect the inventive behavior of employees by fostering amicable relationships and cultivating a favorable work environment for their subordinates (Mutonyi et al., 2021). Bass and Avolio (1994)

described supportive leadership occurring when "the leader displays more frequent individualized consideration by showing general support for the efforts of followers" (p. 202), and that individualized consideration happens when a leader shows workers that they are valued and appreciated (Bass, 1995) by showing concern for employees' individual needs. The concept of *customized support* was described by Podsakoff et al. (1990) as actions leaders use that demonstrate empathy and emotional consideration for their followers. Transformational leadership is considered customized because of the individual consideration that is emphasized, which sets the transformational leadership style apart from other leadership practices (Panagopoulos et al., 2023). Teachers believe support from leadership is important for their wellbeing (Haw et al., 2023). Carless et al. (2000) noted that supported leadership includes giving positive "feedback to staff and recognizing individual achievement" (p. 391). According to Lee and Swaner (2023), supportive leadership in educational settings is connected to employees' happiness and school advancement. The leader's public acknowledgement of teamwork demonstrates that they recognize and endorse the work being done, which, in turn, fosters connection with the team and devotion to the leader's vision.

Empowerment

According to Ahrari et al. (2021) empowering leadership involves delegation of authority and provision of autonomy and responsibility to followers through leader behaviors, enhancing employees' motivation and enabling them to achieve success in their roles. Team members are involved in decision-making by effective leaders (Carless et al., 2000) who establish policies and procedures that allow staff members to participate

in the team's problem-solving and decision-making (Pitler, 2024). A strong team leader gives team members the freedom to make decisions and ensures they have the power to carry them out. Hermawan et al. (2022) noted that empowerment involves reliability, cooperation, agility, and commitment in leadership. Empowerment from leaders fosters a supportive environment where team members demonstrate self-efficacy, flexibility, and dedication (Dyosini, 2024; O'Dell & Ainsworth, 2024). Leaders and workers show dedication through selfless work because of their willingness to attain the objectives set out to achieve (Ahmed, 2021; Chen et al., 2020).

The degree of subordinate empowerment and team success are related to the transformational leadership style of their superiors (Barth & Tsemach, 2023). Employees are empowered through the provision of learning opportunities, and personal consideration from leaders, which are aspects of transformative leadership (Magasi, 2021). Leaders' transformative behaviors have the capacity to influence employees' thoughts about empowerment cognitions, and these thoughts affect the experiences of followers (Saira et al., 2021; Schermuly & Meyer, 2020).

Leadership that is meaningful to employees empowers their ethical, interpersonal, and academic competencies (Hermawan et al., 2022). Transformational leaders encourage, promote self-management, and increase empowerment through autonomy and self-leadership (Liu, 2015). Magasi (2021) noted that transformative leaders promote work engagement through providing opportunity, information, support, and sufficient resources.

Innovative or Lateral Thinking

Effective leaders use creativity to accomplish their objectives, and at times, they also use unusual tactics (Bass, 1985) encompassing clear perspectives grounded on their vision, involving networking, and ensuring risk management (Khanthap, 2022).

Similarly, lateral thinkers seek new ways of solving problems (Sirait et al., 2022) rather than proceeding by logical steps. An innovative or lateral thinking educational leader implements new ways to reach and serve teachers through professional development (Khanthap, 2022) and finds creative ways of solving problems, not necessarily using the traditional ways. Transformational leaders regularly challenge their team members and urge them to think creatively and surpass expectations. Their acceptance of failures as a learning opportunity results in the emergence of innovative behavior (Carless et al., 2000).

Lead by Example

Consistency between their opinions expressed and their actions is a trait of transformational leaders. Excellent leaders make their beliefs and ideals known to the team (Carless et al., 2000). Leadership engagement indicates that principals model appropriate conduct, foster a shared vision, and promote collaboration and dialogue among staff members (Lai, 2022). A leader can make a difference in an employee's career success because effective leadership practices may be replicated by staff members resulting in positive outcomes for the organization (Lai, 2024). The outcomes of effective principals who lead by example encompass the establishment of teacher communities, encouragement of educators to engage in curriculum development, and facilitation of

student self-understanding and growth (Wang, 2021). Employees also model their own leadership practices after their immediate supervisors (Awodiji, 2024; Bass, 1990; Whang, 2021). As more transformational practices are shown by leaders, employees will be more likely to follow transformational behavior and emulate transformational leaders as they are promoted to different leadership positions in the organization (Bass, 1990).

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leadership offers understanding and kindness in character and emotion, which are used to motivate and transform individuals' perspectives on change (Bratton, 2020). According to Nugraha (2021) a charismatic leader is unique, and their influence is due to the admirable and authoritative personality features that can foster favorable character traits in employees. Bass (1995) noted charisma is the most important component of transformational leadership. As a result, charismatic leaders are good at social dynamics and have a strong sense of social awareness. Charismatic leaders demonstrate various actions that improve task concentration, detailed purpose, and value conformity. (Hansen et al., 2020; Widiyanti et al., 2022). They can confidently express their beliefs, which inspires and motivates their followers to align with their vision. Charismatic leaders positively influence their team and can create unity and purpose amongst team members (Da'as, 2023). The leader's ability to communicate effectively and authentically helps to build trust and respect, which are vital components of a successful team (Hansen et al., 2020).

Nugraha (2021) posited that having a unique skill or talent allows charismatic leaders to have an impact on the attitudes, actions, and opinions of others, allowing for

easy control over subordinates. Charisma is a trait of transformational leaders who encourage equality and drive employees to work at a better level (Humam et al., 2024). Charisma improves the spirits and general well-being of followers; however, vision focuses followers' attention on difficult yet desirable objectives. According to Hansen et al. (2020), research suggests charismatic leaders significantly influence motivation and performance of followers. Charismatic leaders can connect with potential followers and present them with interesting opportunities for success. A charismatic leader can assess employees' abilities based on expectations of the tasks and adjust each worker's role to enhance individual performance and helping the team work toward the goals of the institution (Humam et al., 2024).

Summary and Conclusions

Transformational leadership affects social systems and individual behaviour, resulting in positive changes in workers. When transformational leadership is practiced, followers' motivation, morale, and output are improved. Employees are encouraged to be innovative and work towards organizational success. Transformational leaders connect followers and give workers a sense of belonging so that they feel a part of the mission and the collective identity of the organization.

Transformational leadership has been shown to be a beneficial leadership practice in education. In Kuwait, which has a shortage of teachers, transformational leadership has been promoted as an effective practice for administrators. Use of transformational leadership practices by principals in international schools may influence teachers' retention and their overall satisfaction. However, there is limited research concerning

how expatriate teachers and administrators view transformational leadership practices. To address this gap in the literature, I investigated how expatriate teachers and administrators in international schools in Kuwait view the use of transformational leadership practices. The discussion of the methodology used in the study, included the setting and participants, research design and rationale, instrumentation and operationalization of constructs, data collection, and data analysis plan for this study follows in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there were differences between the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices in three international schools in Kuwait. This research was specifically tailored to the context of international schools in Kuwait, offering insights into the use of transformational leadership practices. In Chapter 3, I provide the rationale for the quantitative research and describe the quantitative study design, including the population, sampling procedures, procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, instrumentation, data analysis, threats to validity, ethical procedures, and a concluding summary.

Research Design and Rationale

For this research, I employed a quantitative study. “Quantitative study involves measuring the data and generalizing the results from a sample of a study” (Ghanad, 2023, p. 3794). Survey research methodology, specifically a cross-sectional survey method (see Cvetkovic-Vega et al., 2021; Hall, 2008) was used to collect quantitative data for the causal-comparative design (see Fulmer, 2018; Ghanad, 2023). This design allowed me to understand the nature of the variables by comparison between groups, not manipulation of the variables. Quantitative research involves generating and testing hypotheses (Burkholder et al., 2016; Meyer et al., 2020), which is consistent with comparing expatriate administrators' and teachers' (two levels of the independent variable) perspectives of transformational leadership practices (dependent variable). A quantitative study was chosen because it is the most suitable design to determine the differences

between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on the use of TL practices experienced in international schools in Kuwait.

Expatriate educators' perceptions of TL practices were efficiently captured through an online survey, a design choice that was not only convenient and inexpensive but also ensured easy access to data without being time-consuming. In contrast, a qualitative research methodology would yield descriptive data and would require more time and resources, especially in the case of in-person interviews, which could deviate from the intended objectives of the study (Abbott & McKinney, 2013; Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022).

Given my intent with this study, which was to investigate the disparities between the groups, a quantitative technique was the most appropriate for conducting an objective analysis of the variables. The causal-comparative design, with its ability to examine disparities between groups without the need to manipulate the independent variable (Schenker & Rumrill, 2004), was particularly well-suited for this study.

Methodology

Population

Kuwait has 585 private schools (Oxford Business Group, 2019), 46 of which are international schools. This study was conducted at three English language international schools with K-12th grades. These schools are managed under different boards and governance in Kuwait. According to their websites, as of the 2024–2025 school year, there were almost 5,000 students enrolled in the international schools serving as research sites for this study and approximately 500 educators on staff. The kindergarten

departments are co-ed, while the elementary and middle/high departments are separated by gender. Most students are English language learners whose first language is Arabic. The target population of educators included 436 expatriate teachers and 58 expatriate administrators (principals and assistant principals at all levels) working at these international schools in Kuwait for 1 year or more, to ensure adequate experience with the implementation of TL practices. Although the sample is a small fraction of the entire population of international schools in Kuwait, the sample was sufficient to gather detailed data on expatriate educators' perceptions of TL.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The sampling strategy for this quantitative study was census sampling for the administrators and teachers. Thus, the size of the sampling frame was determined based on the number of available administrative members and teachers working at the schools in this study. The sample was drawn using the criteria of being English speaking expatriate educators and having one or more years of teaching or administrative experience working in their position at their current school in Kuwait. Participants completed the online survey by responding to all items on the survey. I followed Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines to protect the rights of the participants. Specific procedures for identifying, contacting, and recruiting participants are discussed in the following sections. This study was delimited to only English-speaking expatriate K-12 teachers and administrators (principals and assistant principals) in international English language schools in Kuwait. Non-English-speaking educators working at the international schools in Kuwait were not included. The study was also

delimited by the international schools chosen (English language schools) rather than other international schools in Kuwait such as British, Pakistani, Indian, and German schools.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I obtained permission from the heads of schools serving as the research sites to conduct the research study via an anonymous online survey with educators in the schools. Upon obtaining Walden University's IRB approval (no. 04-17-25-0739130), I provided the schools with an email invitation to send to potential participants. The invitation to participate in the anonymous online survey was sent to all expatriate educators in the schools who met the selection criteria. The email included a link to the GTL survey within Google Forms. The first screen of the online survey presented informed consent detailing the purpose of the study, procedures, voluntary participation, expected time required, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were apprised of their ability to withdraw at any time without consequence. Educators who chose to participate clicked a link indicating their consent and proceeded to the survey questions. The initial question regarding their role as administrator or teacher branched to the correct version of the survey for each respondent group. Administrators were asked about their leadership behaviors; teachers were asked about the leadership behaviors of the administrators in the school where they work. Responses were collected in a Google Forms spreadsheet file.

Data were collected anonymously online from administrators and teachers using the GTL survey (Carless et al., 2000), which measures the qualities of a transformational leader based on the seven leadership domains of vision, staff development, support

system, staff empowerment, guide to innovation, exemplary practices, and possessing charisma. Survey completion required the participant to answer a question about their role in the school and the length of time in that role as well as all seven survey items. A survey reminder email was sent after approximately one week.

Instrumentation and Operation of Constructs

The GTL survey was developed by Carless et al. (2000) to assess transformational leadership characteristics with seven items that use a 5-point frequency scale response format to evaluate the behaviors exhibited by transformational leaders (Carless et al., 2000). This scale ranges from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*frequent, if not always*). Each item relates to one of the seven identified TL leadership domains: Vision, Staff Development, Supportive Leadership, Empowerment, Innovative or Lateral Thinking, Leading by Example, and Charismatic Leadership (see Table 1.). The GTL survey was suitable for this study as it corresponds with the main research objective: assessing the perceptions of transformational leadership techniques among expatriate teachers and administrators in international schools.

Separate forms of the GTL were used, with the survey for administrators having statements that began with “As a school administrator, I ...” and the form for teachers had statements that began with “Where I teach, my school administrators ...” Responses were captured in a Google Forms spreadsheet file. I calculated the total score from the GTL responses for each expatriate teacher and administrator by summing the item values, adhering to the survey developers' methodology. Permission to use the GTL survey is in Appendix B.

Table 1*Leadership Domains and Associated Behaviors in the GTL Survey*

Leadership domain	Leadership behaviors
Vision	Communicates a clear and positive vision of the future
Staff development	Treats staff as individuals, supports and encourages their development
Supportive leadership	Gives encouragement and recognition to staff
Empowerment	Fosters trust, involvement, and cooperation among team members
Innovative/lateral thinking	Encourages thinking about problems in new ways, questions assumptions
Lead by example	Is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches
Charisma	Instills pride and respect in others, inspires by being highly competent

Note. Adapted from “A short measure of transformational leadership” by S. A. Carless, A. J. Wearing, and L Mann, 2000, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 14(3), 389-405. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1022991115523> Copyright 2000 by Springer Nature. Adapted with permission.

The GTL was appropriate for this study because the measure is a means to evaluate TL traits in leadership (Turan et al., 2024; Van Beveren et al., 2017). By administering the GTL to administrators and teachers, the GTL allowed me to determine if there were differences between the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of TL practices in three international schools in Kuwait, the purpose of this study.

An instrument that is already in existence should possess a well-established level of validity and reliability (Turan et al., 2024; Wilson, 1996). The GTL survey has been adapted, validated, and employed in prior research investigations including with a concise assessment in which 1,440 subordinates measured the leadership behavior of 695 branch managers in an Australian financial organization. The GTL was found to measure

a single construct of leadership and exhibited satisfactory reliability through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Additionally, evidence supported both convergent and discriminant validity (Carless et al., 2000). The GTL was used to ascertain how workers' views of transformative leadership affected job engagement in China. The conclusion of that study indicated workers who experienced transformational leadership as positive viewed it as a tool that helped them achieve beyond expectations (Chen & Cuervo, 2022).

Leaders with transformational qualities demonstrate greater effectiveness; these attributes lead to incremental enhancements in their efficacy, with TL enhancing the effects of their leadership on outcomes. Consequently, a leader's effectiveness may be enhanced by implementing transformative leadership behaviors in a systematic fashion (Grošelj et al., 2021).

Othman and Khrais (2022) used a cross-sectional, correlational design to investigate the connection between organizational commitment, work satisfaction, and transformational leadership. A convenience sample of 253 registered nurses from two Jordanian government hospitals were administered the GTL survey among other tools (Othman & Khrais, 2022). The authors found that the performance of nurses can be directly affected by a leader's style, and this effect can be either favorable or negative.

Data Analysis Plan

I downloaded the data from the survey site and cleaned it to remove partial responses and anything other than the appropriate numerical responses (see Ilyas & Chu, 2019). I analyzed the collected data using SPSS software to compute the total scores on the GTL survey for each respondent and then perform independent *t* tests between the

means of the teacher and administrator groups on the total and seven domain scores. These analyses allowed me to determine whether the null hypotheses of no significant differences in perspectives of TL behaviors between the two groups of educators should be rejected or not, with a criterion of $p < .05$ for rejection. The RQ and hypotheses that guide this study are as follows:

RQ: What are the differences, if any, between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives regarding the use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools?

H_0 : There are no significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on the use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools, as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

H_a : There are significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on the use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools, as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

Summary data for each of the seven domains and the GTL survey overall is presented. The characteristics of the data may also lead to further descriptive analysis.

Threats to Validity

Validity relates to the soundness of a study's research design, methods, and analysis. My aim was to ensure that the findings obtained are accurate and reliable.

Validity demonstrates the capacity to assess the independent and dependent variables

precisely (Shadish et al., 2002). Recognizing and mitigating threats to validity is crucial in creating a research design that produces a strong study. Evaluating the statistical significance of the null hypothesis is the foundation of most quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). According to the null hypothesis, there are no differences between the mean scores of the groups as measured by the dependent variable (Creswell, 2014).

External Validity

External validity is the researcher's capacity to apply the conclusions of a study to a broader population (Lodico et al., 2010). Threats to external validity pertain to the reasons why conclusions drawn from research findings regarding how they would apply to different individuals, environments, interventions, and results could be false (Shadish et al., 2002). This study presented certain concerns to external validity that warranted consideration.

When individuals alter their responses due to their participation in a study, it is referred to as *reactivity* in testing. Participants in this study may have adjusted their responses about transformational leadership strategies based on institutional requirements. The adjustment may skew data and impede the generalization of results to expatriate educators in other international schools (Shadish et al., 2002). To reduce testing reactivity, I administered anonymous surveys and emphasized the confidentiality of responses to enhance authenticity (see Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The *interaction of selection and experimental variables* arises when traits of the sample influence their responses to the researched variables, which may affect generalization (Duckett, 2021). Expatriate educators in Kuwait may have specific cultural

traits that influence their views on transformational leadership that might be different from other educators in other countries. The interaction effect limits external validity because the findings may not be relevant to international instructors in varied cultural or institutional contexts. Mitigating this threat involved sampling to guarantee participant diversity.

The *specificity of variables* pertains to the extent to which the variables in the study are restricted, which may limit the applicability of the findings to different scenarios (Monaghan et al., 2021). This suggests that if the studied transformational leadership approaches are specific to Kuwait international schools, the findings may not be applicable to other educational contexts. The reactions of expatriate educators to transformational leadership behaviors in Kuwait may be shaped by the distinct cultural, social, or institutional attributes inherent in Kuwaiti schools. Consequently, views on transformational leadership may markedly diverge from those of expatriate educators in other nations or in various educational institutions across the Middle East (see Shadish et al., 2002). This threat to external validity affects generalizability of the results of the study because variables defined or influenced by a specific context may provide different outcomes in alternative settings. To mitigate this threat, I explicitly delineated variables while recognizing cultural and contextual factors in the results.

Reactive effects of experimental arrangements occur when participants' responses are affected by specific elements of the study's environment which may restrict generalizing the findings from the research to similar environments (Duckett, 2021). Expatriate educators may have altered their responses to align with perceived

expectations when answering questions in their work environment. Educators may regard transformational leadership techniques more positively if they identified the study with their institution, or they may have expressed opinions that conform to professional or cultural standards in Kuwait, rather than providing genuine responses. This reaction may yield results that inadequately represent the responses of expatriate educators in a nonexperimental context (see Shadish et al., 2002). To mitigate this concern, I employed anonymous surveys to reduce the influence of perceived expectations.

Internal Validity

Threats to internal validity might compromise the precision of findings by adding potential biases or uncontrolled variables (Shadish et al., 2002). Prevalent risks to internal validity include “history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, experimental mortality, and selection-maturation interaction” (Matthay & Glymour, 2020, p. 378). These threats refer to unforeseen occurrences during the study that influence participants' responses independently of the variables being examined (Duckett, 2021). I used a short time for data collection to constrain the effect of external occurrences.

Maturation entails internal transformations in people throughout time. An enhanced understanding of the Kuwait educational system or a natural acclimatization to cultural norms may influence educators' opinions, regardless of transformational leadership methodologies. To mitigate any effects due to maturation, I included participants who have worked within the district for at least one year and collected the data within a brief time frame.

The *testing* threat arises when frequent evaluations influence participants' responses (Duckett, 2021). This threat suggests that repeated inquiries regarding leadership methods may cause expatriate educators to alter their responses over time, as their own viewpoints change. Because this study only entailed one survey, testing was not likely to be a threat to internal validity.

Instrumentation threats arise when changes occur in measurement instruments or procedures during the study (Duckett, 2021). Modifying survey questions or rating scales on transformational leadership methodologies during the study compromises the comparability of results among participants. Standardization of all devices and methodologies before initiating data collection can reduce this risk. Use of a pre-existing validated instrument also mitigated this threat to internal validity.

Statistical regression happens when participants with extreme scores converge towards the average (Duckett, 2021). Selecting individuals with diverse beginning viewpoints, instead of solely extreme opinions, and employing randomized sampling methods can mitigate the effects of statistical regression (Shadish et al., 2002). However, because this threat is greatest when pre- and posttesting, it did not pertain to the current study.

Experimental mortality denotes participant attrition, which may distort results if specific categories of participants withdraw from the study (Duckett, 2021). Educators possessing strong or critical perspectives on leadership may be more inclined to depart, thereby skewing the final sample. I facilitated participant retention through explicit

communication, and the short participation time needed for the brief survey helped to mitigate dropout rates.

The *selection-maturation interaction* occurs when selection of groups for comparison and their interaction with unrelated developments in their lives may result in confusing outcomes and misinterpretation (Duckett, 2021) potentially compromising the study's results. Expatriates with differing roles as educators in Kuwait may acclimate to the cultural milieu at different rates, and thereby differentially affect their views on leadership techniques (see Shadish et al., 2002). To mitigate this threat, potential administrator and teacher participants were working in their schools for at least one year.

Construct Validity

Threats to construct validity are factors that may compromise the accurate evaluation of the concepts being studied (Shadish et al., 2002; Trafimow, 2022). The risks encompass inadequate operational definitions, measurement bias, sample bias, construct underrepresentation, and cultural differences. Ambiguous or excessively wide operational definitions of transformational leadership or expatriate educators' viewpoints may lead to misinterpretation and uneven results; an *operational definition* provides an explanation of the terminology and variables employed in data collection (Duckett, 2021). To reduce the effect of this threat to construct validity, each operational definition in the study was clearly articulated throughout the investigation.

If the survey or assessment instruments exhibit *bias* (e.g., leading items, excessive complexity, or cultural inappropriateness), they may fail to effectively reflect the

perspectives of expatriate educators. Use of the GTL survey, which is a validated measure for assessing TL, mitigated measurement bias.

If the sample of expatriate educators is not representative of the target population, such as being exclusively composed of teachers from a particular region or grade level, this *sample bias* might cause the findings to not be generalizable to all expatriate educators in Kuwait. Use of census sampling helped to ensure that the sample represented the diverse range of expatriate educators in Kuwait.

Construct underrepresentation may occur if the survey fails to sufficiently cover all aspects of TL or the perspectives of expatriate educators because the results may not accurately reflect the full complexity of the constructs (Spurgeon, 2017). Use of a validated instrument ensured that it includes a comprehensive set of items that represent all critical aspects of TL (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

The focus of the study on expatriates in Kuwait may have resulted in *cultural differences* between expatriates from various countries affecting educators' opinions of transformational leadership and their reactions to survey questions. This was expected as it relates to the focus of the study and was not considered a threat to construct validity.

Statistical Conclusion Validity

Comparing the mean scores of two groups on a variable requires statistical conclusion validity (Drost, 2011). According to Busk (2010), *statistical conclusion validity* guarantees that an accurate conclusion to reject or not reject the null hypothesis has been drawn. Two possible wrong outcomes from statistical testing can be obtained (Garcia-Perez, 2012). The first, known as a Type I error, happens when a researcher

claims that the null hypothesis is true, such as the mean scores of two groups not being statistically different, when they are different (Garcia-Perez, 2012). In a Type II error, the researcher incorrectly rejects the null hypothesis, stating that the means of the groups are statistically different when they are not different (Lipsey, 2000). Until evidence is presented to the contrary, the null hypothesis is taken to be true, that the mean scores of the groups are not significantly different (Creswell, 2012). Researchers reject the null hypothesis when they find statistically significant evidence of a difference between the mean scores of the groups.

Ethical Procedures

I followed the code of ethics for researchers to ensure that ethical criteria for the study were satisfied as it is the obligation of the researcher (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). According to Correia (2023), these include upholding honesty, accepting accountability for one's own work, respecting the rights of others, exhibiting social responsibility, and upholding professional competence. Ethical considerations must be addressed at each stage of the research process. Prior to initiating the study, it was imperative to secure the requisite permissions and approvals, with the purpose of the study clearly articulated.

Approvals for this research were secured from the Walden IRB and the schools designated as research sites. Participants consented to participate, and I, as the sole researcher, was obligated to safeguard participants and maintain confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2009). Protecting participants is a fundamental aspect of the research process. Participants were apprised of the objectives of the study, and that their privacy was safeguarded. The email invitation articulated the purpose and procedures of the study to

ensure that all potential participants comprehended the research process and assurance of the anonymous nature of the brief online survey.

The data are saved on a password-protected external hard drive accessible just by me. During data processing, the data were secured in a locked filing cabinet at my residence, also accessible only by me. Five years post-study completion, I will irrevocably erase participants' data from the password-protected external hard drive using the reformatting feature, which eliminates all data from the drive. These details concerning the storage and deletion of data were also conveyed in the email inviting administrators and teachers to participate in the study.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided a comprehensive explanation of the methodology and design that were employed to ascertain whether a disparity existed in the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators regarding the use of TL techniques. Quantitative data were collected using a cross-sectional survey method within a causal comparative design. The research sites included three international schools in Kuwait spanning from Kindergarten to 12th grade, with a target population of expatriate educators including teachers and administrators who worked in the schools for at least one year. The census sample of teachers and administrators received online informed consent information with the online survey instrument. The GTL survey was used to gather data from the administrators and teachers assessing the seven leadership domains of TL. The total and domain scores on the GTL were analyzed using independent *t* tests to compare the views of TL behaviors between the teacher and administrator groups. In Chapter 4, I present the

results of this study based on the research question. The chapter will include data collection, results, and a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there were differences between the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices in three international schools in Kuwait. The GTL survey was used to measure administrators' and teachers' views of the frequency of administrators' behaviors in each of the domains of TL. Analyses were conducted to compare the GTL survey responses (dependent variable) of expatriate teachers and administrators (two levels of the independent variable). The data analyses were guided by the RQ and hypotheses:

RQ: What are the differences, if any, between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives regarding the use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools?

H_0 : There are no significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

H_a : There are significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present the data collection procedures, results of the data analyses, and a summary.

Data Collection

Three international American schools in Kuwait agreed to participate in the study. The census sample used the criteria of English-speaking expatriate educators having one or more years' experience as an administrator or teacher working at their current schools in Kuwait. Invitations to participate in the study were emailed to 494 educators (58 administrators and 436 teachers), with a total of 122 educators (27 administrators [47%] and 68 teachers [22%]) responding to the online survey (see Table 2). Although the selection criteria specified that responses were requested from educators who had been in their schools for at least one year, 27 respondents (four administrators and 23 teachers) indicated that they had been at their school for less than one year. Because invitations may have been sent to more educators with less than 1 year at their school, response rates may only be estimated for educators who met the selection criteria: 50% for administrators and 16% for teachers.

According to Wu et al. (2022), online surveys using large sample sizes does not result in greater numbers of responses. In this study, the response rate for teachers was somewhat low even though the sample size was moderately large. However, the study was not compromised because of the low response, which is not uncommon in online surveys (see Zahl-Thanem et al., 2021).

Table 2*Survey Respondents*

	Administrators	Teachers	Total
Less than 1 year	4	23	27
More than 1 year	27	68	95
Total	31	91	122

Data were collected within a 2-week timeframe. During the week after the invitation emails were sent to potential participants, the response rate was low. An email reminder sent to all potential participants increased the survey response rate. Because the response rate for the smaller group, the administrators, was satisfactory and the response rate for teachers was adequate, no additional reminders were sent.

To maximize anonymity of respondents and increase response rates, no demographic data were collected. Data concerning demographics of expatriate educators in Kuwait were not available for comparison; therefore, no determination of the representativeness of the sample would have been possible. The initial data collection plan was followed with no modifications.

Results

To prepare the data for analysis, the Google Forms spreadsheet files were downloaded and merged using Excel. I cleaned the data (see Ilyas & Chu, 2019) to verify complete responses from participants and to remove the incomplete response of one teacher who did not consent to participate. All the other responses were complete. I uploaded the data into SPSS and computed the GTL total scores by adding the scores for the seven domain scales.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics present data in a clear, manageable way so that the information is more easily understood (Igual & Seguí, 2024). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample data, including computation of total and domain means and standard deviations for the groups (Table 3) and creation of bar charts by group to depict frequencies of GTL total and domain scores (Figure 1). The administrators rated the frequency of their practice of all seven GTL domains higher than the frequency ratings of administrators' practice by teachers.

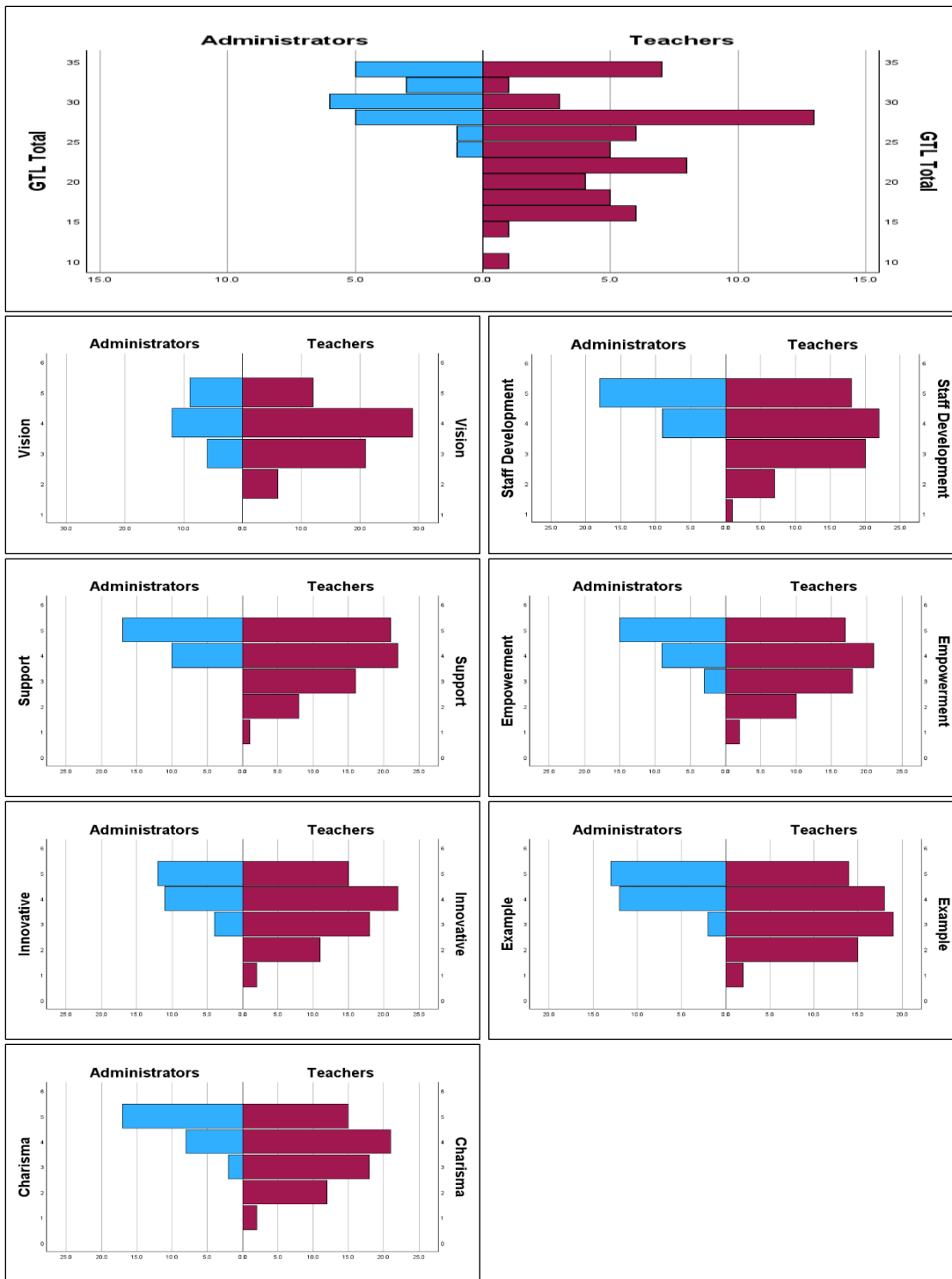
Table 3

Descriptive Statistics

Leadership domain	Administrators		Teachers	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Vision	4.11	.75	3.69	.87
Staff development	4.67	.48	3.72	1.02
Supportive leadership	4.63	.49	3.79	1.06
Empowerment	4.44	.68	3.60	1.11
Innovative/lateral thinking	4.30	.72	3.54	1.10
Lead by example	4.41	.64	3.40	1.14
Charisma	4.56	.64	3.51	1.12
Total GTL	31.11	3.23	25.26	3.23

Figure 1

Bar Charts of GTL Total and Domain Responses by Group



Assumptions of the Statistical Tests

Statistical assumptions are conditions that are appropriate for a statistical test outcome to be valid and reliable (Laerd Statistics, 2019). A *t* test has several assumptions, which include (a) one continuous dependent variable measured at least on an interval scale, (b) one independent variable with two categories, (c) independence of observations, (d) no problematic outliers, (e) approximately normal distributions of the dependent variable for each group representing a category of the independent variable, and (f) homogeneity of variances of these groups (Laerd Statistics, 2019). The measurement level of the dependent variable (GTL total and domain scores) is ordinal; however, frequency scales such as these may be used as interval scales (Howcroft & Rieser, 2021). The study included one independent variable with two mutually exclusive categories (administrators and teachers). The observations, the scores for each participant, were independent of other participants in the study. Because of the nature of the GTL survey, there were no extreme scores that would influence the results negatively. As depicted in Figure 1, distributions of scores on the dependent variable domains for the independent variable categories varied with respect to degree of normality. However, *t* tests have been shown to be robust with respect to violations of the normality assumption (Knief & Forstmeier, 2021). Homogeneity of variance was tested within the *t* test procedures using Levene's test. The homogeneity of variance assumption was met for the vision domain but not met for all other domains and total GTL scores; therefore, Welch's *t* test was used for all *t* tests other than for vision. It is normal to have one or more assumptions not met (Laerd Statistics, 2019).

Analyses and Interpretations

The independent samples *t* tests were conducted to assess whether there were differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives of TL practices in international schools in Kuwait based on the research question that guided this study.

Ratings of the administrators' frequency of use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools were different for administrators and teachers, with administrators' ratings significantly higher on all measures. The independent samples *t* tests for GTL total scores and six domains (staff development, support, empowerment, innovation, leading by example, and charisma) were highly significant ($p < .001$). The *t* test for the vision domain had a lower level of significance ($p = .03$) reflecting the smaller differences between the ratings of administrators and teachers on the vision domain (Table 4).

Based on the results of all *t* tests, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was supported:

H_a: There are significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' perspectives on use of transformational leadership practices in Kuwait international schools as measured by the Global Transformational Leadership survey.

Table 4*Comparisons of Administrators and Teachers on GTL Total and Leadership Domains*

Leadership domain	Levene's test		Independent <i>t</i> test				
	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Mean Diff	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Vision	1.59	.21	2.21	93	.03	.42	.50
Staff development	15.16	< .001	6.13	90	< .001	.95	1.05
Supportive leadership	13.17	< .001	5.24	91	< .001	.84	.89
Empowerment	7.95	< .001	4.43	75	< .001	.84	.83
Innovative/lateral thinking	7.22	< .001	3.90	72	< .001	.75	.75
Lead by example	13.16	< .001	5.49	82	< .001	1.01	.99
Charisma	12.12	< .001	5.69	81	< .001	1.04	1.04
Total GTL	14.98	< .001	5.77	89	< .001	5.85	1.00

Bonferroni Correction for Multiple Tests

The Bonferroni correction is used to control errors, specifically to reduce the possibility of Type I errors (García-Pérez, 2023) when conducting multiple statistical tests. For the Bonferroni correction, the standard alpha level of .05 is divided by the number of tests conducted, a statistical adjustment used to modify the significance of the test. There is, however, controversy over the use of the Bonferroni correction, specifically whether correction is necessary when number of *t* tests is small. Bonferroni is seen as too conservative by some researchers because it may increase Type II errors and not give the true meaning of the results (García-Pérez, 2023).

As advocated by García-Pérez (2023), original *p* values are listed in Table 4. The Bonferroni correction for these data requires a *p* value less than .006 for significance,

computed as alpha of .05/8 tests. Use of the Bonferroni correction would indicate that t tests for the GTL total score and all domains except vision were statistically significant.

Effect Sizes

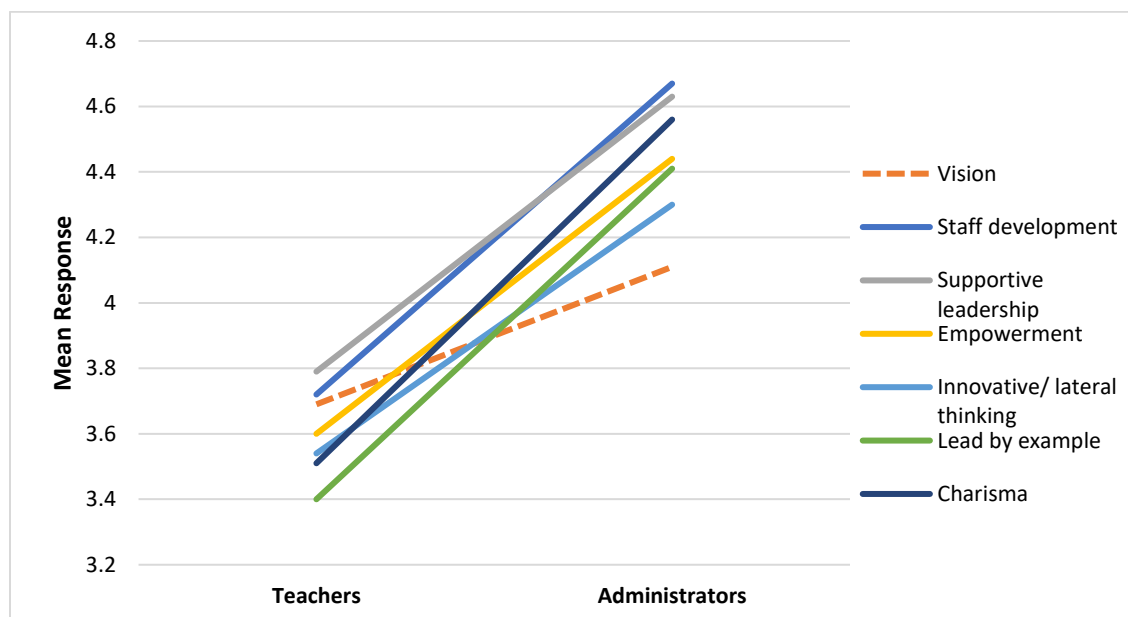
Sullivan and Feinn (2012) noted that tests of significance using p values indicate if a difference between the groups likely exists in a population; effect sizes indicate how much the groups differ, which may be of greater practical value. A widely used measure of effect size is Cohen's d , which is also listed in Table 4 for each t test. Larger values indicate a greater effect size. Cohen's d above .2 indicates a small effect size, above .5 is a medium effect size, and above .8 reflects a large effect (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Thus, the difference between administrators and teachers was both statistically significant and of practical significance for the GTL total and all leadership domains except vision. The difference for the vision domain may be statistically significant but has a lower effect size than the other leadership domains. Graphing the results helped to clarify these findings (Figure 2).

Figure 2 provides a visual representation for each GTL domain as viewed differently by both groups (administrators and teachers). All seven TL domains: vision, staff development, supportive leadership, empowerment, innovative/lateral thinking, lead by example, and charisma were perceived as being more frequently practiced by administrators in comparison to how teachers viewed their administrators' TL practices. The orange dashed line in the figure represents the vision domain of TL practices, which received the lowest mean frequency score from administrators. The other lines representing TL practices were all relatively parallel, indicating similar mean scores for

the domains within each group, but the administrators' mean for vision was notably lower than the others for their group and closest to the frequency ratings of teachers for all domains.

Figure 2

Mean GTL Domain Responses for Teachers and Administrators



Additional Analysis

Although the selection criteria indicated survey respondents should have been in their positions for more than 1 year, 27 educators (four administrators and 23 teachers) with less than 1 year in their positions responded to the survey. Survey responses from these educators with shorter tenure in their positions were compared to those with one or more years. Within both the administrators' and teachers' groups, there were no statistically significant differences on any of the leadership domains or GTL total scores between those with shorter tenure in their positions and those with one or more years.

Summary

In this chapter, the data collection and analysis processes were presented. Usable survey responses were received from 95 educators (27 administrators and 68 teachers) with more than one year of experience in their current positions. Independent samples *t* tests indicated statistically significant differences between expatriate administrators' and teachers' views on GTL total scores and the seven leadership domains. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Cohen's *d* effect sizes ranged from medium to large, indicating the magnitude of the differences between the groups, with administrators' frequency ratings of their TL behaviors in all domains being higher than ratings of their behaviors by teachers. The discussion and interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, implications, recommendations, and conclusion follow in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were differences between the perspectives of expatriate teachers and administrators on the use of transformational leadership practices in three international schools in Kuwait. The GTL scale (Carless et al., 2000) was used to collect data from administrators and teachers. The GTL survey measured the qualities of a transformational leader based on vision, staff development, support system, staff empowerment, guide to innovation, exemplary practices, and possessing charisma (Carless et al., 2000). Invitations to participate in the study were sent to 494 expatriate educators including principals, assistant principals, and teachers who have been working at their international schools in Kuwait for at least one year. A cross-sectional design (see Cvetkovic-Vega et al., 2021; Hall, 2008) was used to collect data that were compared, not manipulated. The data were analyzed using independent t tests in SPSS to compare administrators' and teachers' responses to determine whether to reject the hypothesis of no differences between the groups based on the $p < .05$ criterion. There were significant differences between administrators' and teachers' perspectives of TL practices in international schools in Kuwait as measured by total GTL scores and each of the seven domains. Chapter 5 summarizes and presents an interpretation of the findings, limitations, implications, recommendations, and a conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

According to Al-Mahdy and Alazmi (2023), teacher retention in Kuwait, particularly for international schools, remains challenging; effective leadership practices are among the factors associated with consistent teacher retention (Arthur & Bradley,

2023; Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). When employees are motivated through effective leadership, they are more satisfied with their work and go beyond what is expected to promote the goals of their workplace (Bass, 1995). Organizations where the leadership employs TL practices have noted overall success (Abdul Halim et al., 2021; Sezgin et al., 2024). The findings of this study indicated that the teachers did not view their administrators' use of TL practices the same way their administrators believed they were implementing them. Given that administrators and teachers viewed the implementation of TL practices differently, the positive effects of TL practices on teacher retention and organizational success reported in the literature may not be the same in these international schools. When TL practices are implemented in organizations by leaders, employees are motivated to work collaboratively towards common goals (Bakker et al., 2023). This study revealed that the administrators rated themselves as frequently implementing all seven domains of TL practices, which, according to Kilag et al. (2024), is likely to lead to the overall success of the learning environment. However, teachers did not view their administrators as implementing the TL practices as frequently as did the administrators themselves. The differences in perspectives shown in the data offered relevant insights about the use of TL practices in these international schools in Kuwait. Findings from the seven domains of the GTL survey will be discussed in detail.

Vision

Transformational leaders clearly articulate the principles associated with the vision of their organization, which inspires followers (Carless et al., 2000; Pitler, 2024). A clearly articulated vision within an organization helps to guide both leaders and

followers to work towards the mission of the organization (Bakker et al., 2023).

However, if the vision is not understood the same way by all stakeholders, it will have an unfavorable effect that may lead to a lack of commitment for educators and, by extension, affect overall student and organization performance (Gibbons et al., 2021). The findings from this study revealed that administrators and teachers did not perceive communication of the vision of their school the same way. The administrators rated their practice of the TL domain of vision significantly higher than the teachers' rating of their administrators. The significant differences in the mean scores indicated that administrators viewed themselves as more effective communicators of the vision of their organization than teachers' perception of receiving or comprehending the vision. This gap could involve differences as varied as how strategic planning is conducted and executed in the organization or how information is disseminated within the organization. "A key element of leadership is communication, and it is essential for leaders to communicate effectively because it reveals aspects of leaders as well as it influences others and predicts outcomes for all stakeholders in an institution" (Liu et al., 2023, p. 1). Al Ajmi (2024) posited that transformational leaders can motivate staff members to work toward the goals of the institution through their clear visions and plans. However, unclear goals are associated with a lack of buy-in and resistance to changes, especially if goals are not communicated clearly. Transformational leaders create a positive culture which encourages effective communication of principles concerning vision (Khan et al., 2020). These principles are clearly expressed, and staff members use the guided expectations to work toward the expected vision.

Staff Development

Successful leaders encourage and promote professional development of their employees (Bellibaş et al., 2021). In this study, the administrators' mean score on staff development was significantly higher than the teachers' mean score, with one of the highest effect sizes indicating a large difference between administrators' and teachers' views of administrators' support and encouragement of staff development in their schools. It is important for leaders to promote and support professional growth and encourage lifelong learning among staff members. In education, transformational leaders can influence the professional practices of their teachers, and as a result, enable their employees to grow as leaders (Hilel & Ramírez-García, 2022; Tran et al., 2024). Teachers should be involved in the types of programs chosen to ensure professional development is based on the needs of the staff (Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021). Bass (1985) and Bellibaş et al. (2021) noted effective leaders not only encourage but also promote and support overall development of their staff; however, the results of the study indicated that teachers perceived staff development as lacking or inconsistent even though administrators believed they provided frequent opportunities for staff development.

Supportive leadership

Supportive leadership encourages individualized consideration by showing care and trust for staff (Bass, 1995). In this study, administrators believed they were more supportive than indicated by the teachers' rating of the support received from their administrators. Lee and Swaner (2023) posited that leadership support fosters happiness

and builds connection within the team. It is important that leaders provide support because teachers believe it enhances their overall well-being in school (Haw et al., 2023). If teachers believe their well-being is not a consideration for administrators, the work environment may be negatively affected. Teachers' well-being is positively associated with relationship building among all stakeholders in schools as well as academic results (Benevene et al., 2020).

Empowerment

Carless et al. (2000) noted that an indicator of effective leadership is the involvement of team members in decision making in the organization. Results from the survey indicated that the quality of trust and involvement is not perceived the same by teachers as by the administrators, who felt they were empowering their staff members. Hermawan et al. (2022) noted that transformational leaders encourage their workers by endorsing their competencies; thus, giving workers a sense of self-management increases empowerment (Liu, 2015). Although administrators felt they were empowering staff by involving them and delegating responsibilities (see Ahrari et al., 2021), staff members felt they were not as engaged and trusted to complete tasks. This lack of trust may affect teachers' morale and the overall learning environment (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020; Karacabey et al., 2020).

Innovative/Lateral Thinking

Innovative/lateral thinking leaders promote effective problem-solving skills and creative thinking, which involves new ways of implementing strategies (Khanthap, 2022). Administrators rated themselves as frequently engaging in innovative/lateral

thinking; the survey results suggested that they saw themselves as open to change and that they encouraged staff members to think creatively. However, teachers' perspectives on the frequency of administrators' creative thinking were not the same as their leaders'. These differences in thinking could suggest cultural barriers to new methods and ideas.

Lead by Example

The extent to which leaders display exemplary behaviors that are expected determines if they are leading by example (Carless et al., 2000). Administrators rated themselves as modeling exemplary behaviors. But teachers reported a different perspective of their administrators demonstrating exemplary behaviors as leaders. This inconsistency in perspective between the two groups demonstrated that the leadership behaviors are not viewed the same. The TL qualities of a leader who leads by example involve making their beliefs known to the staff members and modeling those principles (Carless et al., 2000). TL behaviors involve consistency in what is expressed and what is practiced; the differences in the results suggested a lack of the leaders' credibility as role models. When leaders practice TL behaviors, the staff members are expected to mirror the behaviors, which helps to create a positive workplace (Bass, 1995).

Charisma

Nugraha (2021) noted that a charismatic leader possesses unique abilities to influence and motivate employees positively through their personality. Charismatic leaders can create unity and purpose among team members (Da'as, 2023) because the employees admire and respect their leaders. The results of the study indicated that administrators rated themselves as charismatic leaders who have demonstrated positive

influence on their team. However, teachers' perspective of their administrators as charismatic leaders was not as strong. Although administrators viewed themselves as inspiring, teachers might not be experiencing the emotional connection that is associated with inspiration.

Summary of GTL Responses

The statistically significant differences in perspectives between the two groups highlighted the inconsistencies in the implementation of TL as viewed by administrators and teachers. Teachers consistently rated their administrators lower than how administrators rated themselves for all domains. The consistent gap between administrators and teachers for all seven TL domains is likely an indication of unclear communication among administrators and teachers. The differences in perspectives may suggest that administrators misinterpret their TL behaviors as clear and supportive. However, the lowest rating of administrators for themselves was on the vision domain, which involves "communicating a clear and positive vision of the future" (Carless et al., 2000). This lower rating may indicate that administrators were aware that their communication with teachers was lacking, but they may not have realized the extent to which failure to effectively communicate their vision of the future to teachers may affect the teachers' perceptions of all domains of their leadership.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size is a limitation to generalization. Only a few international schools and a small group of expatriate teachers and administrators participated in the survey when compared to the total number of expatriate educators in Kuwait. Therefore, findings

cannot be generalized to include all educators in Kuwait or all international schools in Kuwait.

Transformational leadership theory was chosen to ground this study because the model has been implemented by leaders successfully in many educational organizations (Abdul Halim et al., 2021; Khumalo, 2019; Sezgin et al., 2024; Thomas et al., 2020; Windasari et al., 2025). However, the culture and policy in the Kuwait educational system may not be the same as other countries, and therefore the context-specific setting of the schools may not reflect the same experiences found in schools elsewhere. The sample in the study included K-12 expatriate English-speaking educators. The views of TL practices might differ elsewhere because the nationalities or backgrounds of the participants were not stated; therefore, it could not be determined if participants were from similar or different backgrounds. Data reflected the views of those willing to participate in the survey because participation was voluntary. The focus of this study was the perspectives of expatriate administrators and teachers in Kuwait international schools, specifically American curriculum-based schools. In this study, I used a quantitative approach in which only a survey was used to collect data. A single way of collecting data limits the depth of information, and results may not be holistic (Karer et al., 2020). A mixed methods approach might offer more insight into the research problem. There may be a construct validity limitation in the use of the GTL survey in the Kuwait cultural setting due to misalignment with the interpretation of TL concepts, which may have affected the results, although the GTL survey is reliable and used in other studies successfully.

Recommendations

It is recommended that for future research the sample should be larger, which would increase generalizability. The sample should not only include educators in Kuwait but also educators from the other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, such as Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar. These inclusions would help to develop an overall understanding of the cultural or contextual factors and how these factors affect TL practices. The use of a mixed-method approach would improve the trustworthiness of the results because it offers more comprehensive insight into the research problem (Dawadi et al., 2021) and might provide a clearer understanding of TL practices in international schools. The use of surveys with interviews or focus groups may provide meaningful data that can complement and validate the findings of this study (Dawadi et al., 2021).

Implications

The results from this study can contribute to positive social change both at the organizational and individual levels within international schools in Kuwait. At the organizational level, the insights gained from the study can provide school administrators with information about how their leadership qualities were perceived by teachers. With this awareness, leaders can develop a more supportive, collaborative school environment, which may help to address the ongoing concerns of staff retention in international schools. By more fully implementing TL practices, international schools may support a school culture that offers collaboration and prioritizes continuous growth through professional development. At the individual level, an understanding of how TL practices

were viewed by both teachers and administrators can foster better relationships, improve job satisfaction, and, by extension, motivate staff to exceed their job expectations.

This quantitative study has several methodological implications that can be considered for on-going educational leadership research. Kuwait is a multicultural society in the Middle East, and the use of the GTL scale within this teaching context has shown limitations as well as positive aspects of its use. Although the instrument is standardized, it may not be sufficiently aligned to the multicultural setting of Kuwait. For example, the item referring to leading by example asked if the leaders “are clear about their values and practice what they preach,” which may not culturally align in the context of Kuwait, where individual values are not accepted in schools and must be aligned to the affiliated beliefs of the country.

The theoretical implications of the findings of the study have contributed to the application of TL in the international educational context. Although the study supported the domains of TL, the findings imply that there is a need to examine the cultural differences and roles of leaders because leadership behaviors can be interpreted differently based on the experiences and backgrounds of individuals. The study contributed to the gap in literature about perspectives of expatriate educators’ use of TL in international schools in Kuwait, offering valuable insights that can be used to further examine TL perceptions in different schools in Kuwait and the surrounding region.

Through this study, I offered recommendations for practitioners operating in international schools. It is important for international school leaders to create professional development programs focusing on motivation and individual support, with opportunities

for administrators and teachers to communicate and provide feedback with mutual understanding and respect. This communication may enhance relationships and build better understanding of the vision of their institution. Educational leaders can adapt leadership styles based on the needs of the diverse expatriate staff and empower teachers through motivation to contribute positively to schools.

Conclusions

This study revealed significant gaps between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the use of transformational leadership practices in international schools in Kuwait. Administrators rated their use of TL behaviors as more frequent than the teachers rated the administrators' use of TL behaviors across all domains on the GTL survey. The findings of this study revealed the need for more inclusive, supportive, and empowering leadership practices that bridge this perceptual divide. When administrators in international schools in Kuwait implement TL practices in a culturally accepted manner, educators may be empowered and a more cohesive learning environment developed. Focusing on collaboration, active communication, improving teacher morale, and applying the TL practices in a culturally responsive way may lead to more effective and equitable school environments being established.

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Appendix A: Global Transformational Leadership Survey

Educational Leadership Survey (Administrators)

How long have you been an administrator in your current school?

- (1) Less than 1 year
- (2) 1 to 3 years
- (3) 4 to 6 years
- (4) 7 to 9 years
- (5) More than 10 years

Please select the response that best applies to each of these seven (7) statements:

As a school administrator, I	Never	Rarely or never	Neither rarely nor frequently	Frequently	Very frequently if not always
... communicate a clear and positive vision of the future.					
... treat staff as individuals, support and encourage their development.					
... give encouragement and recognition to staff.					
... foster trust, involvement, and cooperation among team members.					
... encourage thinking about problems in new ways and question assumptions.					
... am clear about my values and practice what I preach.					
... instill pride and respect in others and inspire them by being highly competent.					

Educational Leadership Survey (Teachers)

How long have you been a teacher in your current school?

- (1) Less than 1 year
- (2) 1 to 3 years
- (3) 4 to 6 years
- (4) 7 to 9 years
- (5) More than 10 years

Please select the response that best applies to each of these seven (7) statements:

My school administrators	Never	Rarely or never	Neither rarely nor frequently	Frequently	Very frequently if not always
... communicate a clear and positive vision of the future.					
... treat staff as individuals, support and encourage their development.					
... give encouragement and recognition to staff.					
... foster trust, involvement, and cooperation among team members.					
... encourage thinking about problems in new ways and question assumptions.					
... are clear about their values and practices what they preach.					
... instill pride and respect in others and inspire me by being highly competent.					

Appendix B: Permission to Use Global Transformational Leadership Survey

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