The Effectiveness of the Professional Development Opportunities on Arabic Subjects' Middle Leaders in Private Schools in Dubai

فاعلية فرص التطوير المهني للقيادات المتوسطة للمواد العربية في المدارس الخاصة بدبي

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the professional development opportunities available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects within private schools in Dubai and assesses the impact of these opportunities from the perspectives of both leaders and teachers. The research employs a survey method for primary data collection, utilizing self-administered questionnaires adapted from existing literature to reflect the research objectives. Convenience sampling was used to select participants, including 70 teachers and 70 middle leaders, ensuring efficient and effective data collection. Findings reveal that middle leaders in Arabic subjects engage in a variety of professional development activities, with a strong emphasis on training courses in teaching pedagogy and leadership. Additional opportunities include leadership management programs, specialized courses, coaching, mentoring, and self-assessment strategies. The study demonstrates a significant positive impact of these professional development opportunities on both middle leaders and teachers. Challenges such as heavy workloads, lack of role clarity, and power overlaps are identified, emphasizing the need for clear job descriptions and structured role definitions. The study suggests that tailored professional development programs are crucial for meeting the diverse needs of educational leaders and recommends further research into the effectiveness of induction programs, strategies to address middle leader challenges, and the long-term impact of professional development. By investing in ongoing training and support, schools can enhance the growth and development of their staff, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

خلاصة

تتناول هذه الأطروحة فرص التطوير المهني المتاحة للقيادات الوسطى في مواد اللغة العربية في المدارس الخاصة في دبي، وتقيّم تأثير هذه الفرص من وجهة نظر القادة والمعلمين. أُستخدم في هذه الأطروحة البحثية طريقة الاستبيان لجمع البيانات الأولية، حيث تم استخدام استبيانات ذاتية التوجيه معدّلة من الأدبيات الحالية لتعكس أهداف البحث. تم استخدام العينة المتيسرة لاختيار المشاركين، بما في ذلك 70 معلمًا و70 قائدًا وسطى، لضمان جمع البيانات بكفاءة وفعالية. تكشف النتائج أن القادة الوسطى في مواد اللغة العربية يشاركون في مجموعة متنوعة من الأنشطة التطويرية المهنية، مع التركيز بشكل كبير على الدورات التدريبية في منهجيات التدريس والقيادة. تشمل الفرص الإضافية برامج إدارة القيادة، الدورات المتخصصة، التدريب، التوجيه، واستراتيجيات التقييم الذاتي. يوضح البحث تأثيرًا إيجابيًا كبيرًا لهذه الفرص التطويرية المهنية على كل من القادة الوسطى والمعلمين. يتم تحديد تحديات مثل الأعباء الكبيرة في العمل، عدم وضوح الأدوار، وتداخل السلطات، مما يبرز الحاجة إلى أوصاف وظيفية واضحة وتعريفات منظمة للأدوار. تقترح الدراسة أن البرامج التطويرية المهنية المخصصة ضرورية لتلبية الاحتياجات المتنوعة للقادة التربويين، وتوصي بإجراء مزيد من الأبحاث حول فعالية برامج التوجيه، واستراتيجيات معالجة تحديات القادة الوسطى، والتأثير طويل الأمد للتطوير المهني. من خلال الاستثمار في التدريب المستمر والدعم، يمكن للمدارس تعزيز نمو وتطوير موظفيها، مما يعود بالنفع في النهاية على نتائج تعلم الطلاب.

DEDICATION

To My Mom, Sister, Grandmother and all the strong women that were part of my journey … I did it!

To my husband, the love of my life and the man that believed in me ... I couldn’t have done that without your support.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

The urgency for leadership development has never been more pronounced. Businesses realize they need leaders who can handle today's unpredictable and complex situations. There's a growing consensus that leadership development shouldn't be limited to top managers (Moldoveanu and Narayandas, 2019).

1.1 Background and context

Students deserve not only excellent teaching but also guidance from well-led teachers. School leaders, particularly principals, are pivotal in navigating their schools through evolving social and policy environments. They establish conducive conditions, structures, and cultures for effective learning and teaching. Additionally, they empower teachers to adapt positively to the inevitable uncertainties of their professional lives, thereby fostering their dedication, well-being, and effectiveness in improving the learning, achievements, and future opportunities of children and youth (Day and Gu, 2014).

The leadership of a school is not solely the responsibility of the principal. For the vision for students to be fully realized, leadership must be shared among multiple individuals. Principals often share tasks and let others take on leadership roles. This gives staff a chance to step up for middle or senior leadership roles. Principals use these chances to pick the right people to help the school adapt to changes. New leadership roles have specific jobs and can be either permanent or temporary. Middle leaders play a critical role in school administration, serving as a bridge between upper management and classroom teachers (Harris, 2013). As such, their leadership skills and pedagogical practices significantly impact teaching quality and student outcomes (Day & Gu, 2014). Middle leaders serve as key conduits for

implementing school policies and initiatives within the classroom environment (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). They translate the vision and goals set forth by upper management into actionable strategies that directly impact teaching and learning practices. Additionally, middle leaders provide vital support and guidance to classroom teachers, facilitating professional development opportunities and fostering a collaborative culture within the school community (Harris, 2018).

Furthermore, middle leaders often serve as mentors and role models for their peers, inspiring and guiding them towards professional growth and excellence (Bush & Glover, 2014). Their ability to effectively communicate expectations, provide constructive feedback, and cultivate a positive working environment greatly influences the morale and motivation of teachers (Day & Gu, 2014).

In essence, the role of middle leaders in school administration cannot be understated. Their leadership skills and pedagogical practices are integral to fostering a conducive learning environment and promoting student success. Middle leaders aim to improve student outcomes by leading pedagogical change, ensuring staff alignment with school vision and policies, promoting cultural responsiveness, fostering family and community engagement, maintaining a safe school environment, supporting teacher development, and promoting innovation through technology (Ministry of Education, 2012).

1.2 Rationale of the study

The rationale for this study lies in the need to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs tailored specifically for Arabic subject teachers in middle leadership positions. The

study seeks to determine the extent to which these programs contribute to enhancing both leadership skills and teaching methods among participants.

Understanding the cultural context of teaching Arabic is crucial in this regard, considering the unique linguistic and cultural aspects inherent in Arabic education. It is imperative to identify training approaches that align with the needs of Arabic subject leaders and cater to the diverse requirements of students and teachers within this context (Ministry of Education, 2012). While existing research underscores the importance of school leadership in facilitating effective teaching and learning practices (Day & Gu, 2014), this study focuses on the specific role of middle leaders in Arabic subject education. Middle leaders serve as vital intermediaries between school management and classroom teachers, influencing teaching quality and student outcomes through their leadership and pedagogical practices. Additionally, they play a pivotal role in implementing school policies and initiatives within the classroom environment, directly impacting teaching and learning practices (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

Given the unique challenges and opportunities associated with teaching Arabic, the effectiveness of training programs for middle leaders in this subject area holds significant implications for improving student outcomes and fostering a conducive learning environment. Thus, this study aims to shed light on the specific training needs and strategies that can empower Arabic subject leaders to effectively navigate their roles and positively impact teaching and learning practices within their schools.

The research focused on private schools in Dubai due to their diverse educational environments and dynamic leadership structures. These schools, with their blend of international and local teaching staff, provide a unique context for examining the professional

development opportunities available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects. By selecting this setting, the study aimed to explore the impact of these opportunities from the perspectives of both leaders and teachers. A purposive sampling method was used to choose participants, specifically targeting teachers and middle leaders in Arabic subjects, ensuring that the insights gathered were directly relevant to understanding the effectiveness and impact of professional development initiatives in this specific context.

1.3 Research questions

- What types of professional development opportunities are available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects?

This question aims to explore the range of professional development opportunities specifically designed for middle leaders in Arabic subjects. By identifying and categorizing these opportunities, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the options available to Arabic middle leaders for enhancing their leadership skills and pedagogical practices. This exploration may encompass various forms of professional development, such as workshops, seminars, courses, coaching sessions, mentoring programs, and collaborative learning experiences.

- What is the impact of these opportunities from the perspectives of both leaders and teachers?

This question delves into the perceived impact of professional development opportunities on both middle leaders and teachers involved in Arabic education. By gathering insights from leaders and teachers, the study aims to assess the effectiveness of professional development initiatives in enhancing leadership skills, improving teaching methods, and ultimately

influencing student learning outcomes. Additionally, this question seeks to explore the experiences, perspectives, and feedback of participants regarding the relevance, applicability, and overall effectiveness of professional development opportunities in meeting their needs and addressing the challenges they encounter in Arabic language education. Through this exploration, the study aims to uncover strengths, areas for improvement, and potential areas of alignment between professional development initiatives and the goals of Arabic subject leaders and teachers.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study holds significant implications for various stakeholders within the realm of Arabic language education, including educators, school administrators, policymakers, and researchers.

By evaluating the effectiveness of professional development programs tailored for middle leaders in Arabic subjects, this study contributes to the ongoing efforts to enhance the professional development opportunities available to educators. The insights gained from the study can inform the design and implementation of future professional development initiatives, ensuring that they are relevant, impactful, and aligned with the needs of Arabic subject leaders and teachers. Moreover, the study acknowledges the importance of understanding the cultural context of Arabic language education. By considering the cultural nuances inherent in Arabic instruction, the study aims to ensure that professional development opportunities are culturally responsive and relevant to the diverse needs of Arabic subject leaders and students. This approach can help bridge cultural gaps, promote inclusivity, and enhance the overall effectiveness of professional development initiatives in Arabic language education.

Also, the findings of this study can inform policy decisions and educational practices related to professional development in Arabic language education. Policymakers and school administrators can use the insights gained from the study to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation, curriculum development, and teacher training programs. By aligning policies and practices with the needs and experiences of educators, policymakers can promote the continuous improvement of Arabic language education and contribute to the overall advancement of educational outcomes.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The dissertation is structured into five chapters, each serving a specific purpose in the research process.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study, providing an overview of the research topic, the rationale behind the research, key research questions, and the significance of the study. Additionally, it offers a brief overview of the dissertation's structure, outlining what each subsequent chapter will cover.

The second chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to conducting a thorough literature review. The literature review encompasses both seminal works and recent research articles, providing a comprehensive overview of the scholarly discourse surrounding the research topic. Key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks employed in previous studies are critically examined and synthesized. Following the review of relevant studies, attention is turned to identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions within the existing literature. By critically analyzing the strengths and limitations of previous research, this section aims to pinpoint areas where further investigation is warranted.

In Chapter 3, the methodology employed in the study is outlined. It includes looking at existing information for the first part and gathering new data through survey for the second part. The process followed ethical rules to protect participants and their information. Both types of research methods were combined to get a better understanding of the topic.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, starting with the presentation and analysis of numerical findings, followed by the tabulation and discussion of textual findings. It also includes a discussion of the document analysis conducted and proposes potential amendments or additions based on the findings.

The final chapter summarizes the key findings of the study and explains its importance to the education community. It discusses the implications of the study and provides recommendations for future research and educational practice, drawing on the insights gained from the research process.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

2.1 Teacher leadership- meaning and history

Improving schools is a priority worldwide, both academically and politically. Teacher leadership is seen as a promising approach to enhance student academic performance and shape school culture. In this context, leadership doesn't just mean holding a title, but rather refers to teachers' capacity to lead within and beyond the classroom, contribute to the learning community, influence others to improve educational practices, and take on responsibilities that foster a culture of learning and self-improvement (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2009).

The evolving demands faced by educational institutions have given rise to what is commonly known as teacher leadership. This concept refers to the ability of teachers, whether individually or collectively, to influence their peers, school administrators, and other members of the educational community in order to enhance teaching and learning practices. The primary goal is to improve student learning outcomes and achievements (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2009). While this phenomenon is most prominently observed in Western educational settings, it empowers educators to drive positive changes within their schools and take on various leadership roles. Beyond their traditional teaching duties, teacher leaders are driven by a commitment not only to the academic advancement of their students but also to the overall success of their schools (Shah, 2020).

Bangs and MacBeath (2012) define teacher leadership in a way that resembles transformational leadership, where leaders empower their colleagues to improve their professional practice by doing things they wouldn't typically do alone (Wasley, 1991). This

aligns with Murphy's (2007) perspective, suggesting that teacher leadership involves enabling colleagues through collegial influence to enhance their professional practices.

The evolution of teacher leadership can be traced through four phases:

- In the 1970s, the focus was on organizational management, with teachers taking on formal roles.
- In the 1980s, teaching leadership emerged, where teachers were given special designations focusing on evaluating teaching or the curriculum.
- The 1990s saw the rise of distributed leadership, emphasizing teacher collaboration, teamwork, and lifelong learning.
- In the 2000s, transformational leadership gained prominence, involving teachers actively in decision-making regarding the school's vision and mission, crucial for school improvement (Mooi, Ganakumaran, and Lin, 2018).

However, studies have shown that teacher leadership is not fully recognized in schools, and there are various obstacles hindering its proper implementation. The concept of teacher leadership remains unclear, particularly regarding roles and responsibilities, often misinterpreted as hierarchical leadership roles, placing teachers in positions of power over their colleagues (Cheung et al., 2018). This misunderstanding leads to teachers being burdened with quasi-administrative duties, supposedly to promote distributed leadership.

Consequently, the true culture of teacher leadership is overshadowed by teachers saddled with additional administrative tasks, mistakenly viewed as formal designations rather than leadership qualities that should be cultivated by all teachers (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008; Fairman and Mackenzie, 2015).

2.2 Importance of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership has a significant impact on school improvement (York-barr and Duke, 2004). Through activities like reflection, collaboration, sharing best practices, teamwork, and making collective decisions, teachers can share valuable knowledge that contributes to school excellence (Lieberman and Miller, 2005; Spillane, 2005; Silva et al., 2000).

Research suggests that school leaders play a crucial role in fostering collaborative cultures and empowering teachers to meet students' needs and enhance classroom practices (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). When teachers are given more autonomy and opportunities to take on leadership roles, it boosts their confidence and improves their teaching methods (Taylor et al., 2011). Sharing leadership responsibilities between principals and teachers also increases teachers' self-efficacy, leading to positive outcomes for students' achievement (Caprara et al., 2006). Additionally, distributed leadership involving various stakeholders within the school community, as advocated by Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss (2009), promotes collaboration, commitment, and effective management of educational reforms (Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015).

2.3. Teacher leadership in Arab countries

In countries like those in the Arab world and Asia-Pacific, education research has been around for a long time, even before some Western countries. But in many of these places, research mostly focuses on how things are done rather than on the theories behind educational leadership, like in the West. Research predominantly focuses on Western contexts, with a dearth of studies examining teacher leadership in Arab educational settings, where leadership

roles are less defined and culturally specific (Hallinger & Hammad, 2017). Also, to understand how Arab educators see educational leadership, it's important to look at the words they use to talk about it in both academic circles and in practice. Before diving into how Arab educators view educational leadership, it's essential to understand the Arabic terms they use for it. Since there's not much research in this area in Arab regions, this study aims to provide new insights and expand understanding of educational leadership. It uses a method called grounded theory, which looks at how people talk about their practices, and also looks at how language is used in different social and cultural contexts. This helps us understand how educational leadership is seen in Arab countries (Sellami et al., 2019).

In Arab and Muslim countries, the terms 'Tarbiyyah' and 'Ta'leem' are commonly used in education but carry specific meanings. Some countries refer to their Ministry of Education as either Tarbiyyah and Ta'leem or just Ta'leem. For example, Qatar uses "Wizaarat at-Ta’leem wa Ta’leem al-’Ali," the UAE uses "Wizaarat at-Tarbiyyah wa Ta’leem," and Saudi Arabia uses "Wizaarat at-Ta’leem." This variation also extends to how educators are addressed, such as Mua’llem, Murrabi, or Mudarris. Educational systems in these countries reflect their colonial past, whether British or French (British Council, 2013). Understanding the relationship between discourse and culture highlights the role of language in shaping thoughts on knowledge and education (Schwartzman, 1989). By studying how school principals, considered as educational leaders, define educational leadership, one can gain insight into cultural perspectives on education. (Escobar-Ortloffand Ortloff, 2003; Callow, 1999).

While the concept of educational leadership differs from one society to another, there's a notable gap in research exploring how it's defined from an Arab perspective. Many

educators, although recognizing this gap, often adopt standard practices without tailoring them to their specific contexts. Consequently, culturally sensitive studies of educational leadership are scarce (Escobar-Ortloff & Ortloff, 2003). In the Arab world, the concept and definition of educational leadership vary considerably. Despite sharing a common language, culture, religion, and history, Arab countries exhibit significant diversity in terms of ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, familial, tribal, regional, socioeconomic, and national identities (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004). For instance, some studies associate Tarbiyyah with Islamic education, emphasizing human growth and development (Ahmed, 2012). Tarbiyyah encompasses moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social development, aligned with the primary goal of Islamic education to achieve oneness with God (Islamic Studies Resources, n.d.). In Arab culture, the concept of Tarbiyyah underscores the responsibility to seek knowledge and instill human values and ideals. Intellectual knowledge (Ta'leem) is not solely acquired through Tarbiyyah but is also actively pursued, leading to moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social transformation (Pedder, 2016).

2.4. Understanding middle leadership and its role

Harris et al. (2019) noted an increase in literature about middle leadership since 2003. Forde et al. (2019) discovered that middle leaders might become too focused on tasks, which is backed by Lambert (2022).

Various studies have explored the role of middle leaders in diverse settings, yet there remains a lack of consensus on their specific responsibilities due to the contextual nature of their roles (Lipscombe et al., 2021). Middle leaders typically operate as intermediaries between senior leadership and teaching staff, serving to connect the two (Bryan, 2017; Bush, 2016). These positions can take formal or informal shapes, including informal teacher leaders

who influence new teachers without holding official roles (De Nobile, 2018; Busher et al., 2007). Moreover, middle leaders often balance teaching duties with their leadership responsibilities (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016). Defining middle leadership is tricky because their roles vary widely depending on the situation. Despite limited research on their impact, middle leaders are vital for shaping teacher practices, fostering teamwork, driving school reforms, and supporting professional development (Lipscombe et al., 2021).

Several studies predominantly view middle leaders as instructional leaders (Bryant, 2019; Tang et al., 2022). Gurr and Drysdale (2013) propose a framework for effective school leadership, delineating three levels of engagement. Level 1 revolves around teaching and learning, level 2 concerns school capacity, and level 3 encompasses the external context. They argue that while middle leaders are heavily involved in level 1 leadership tasks, focusing on teaching methods, curriculum, assessment, and student issues, their engagement in level 2 tasks is minimal, and they are rarely involved at level 3. They suggest that middle leaders should have varying degrees of involvement across all three levels. However, empirical studies, such as those by Ghamrawi (2010) and Adey (2000), indicate that middle leaders are minimally engaged in level 3 activities, which traditionally fall under senior leadership roles, and they have limited participation in whole-school policy-making.

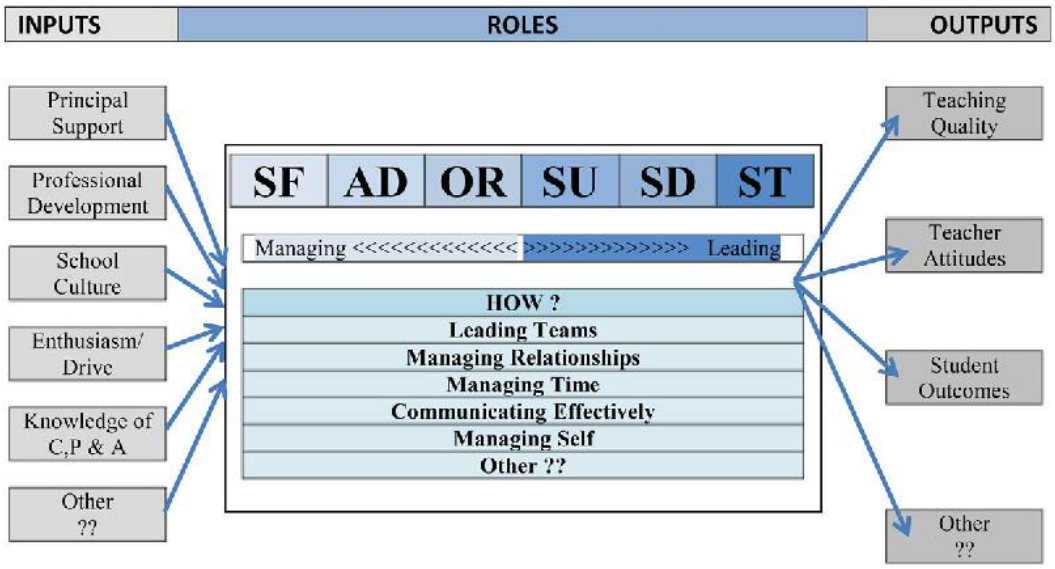
Middle leadership and principalship entail fundamentally different roles and duties, as outlined by Harris et al. (2019) and Lipscombe et al. (2023). While middle leaders are tasked with managing and overseeing pedagogical aspects, they do not carry the overarching responsibility for the school's operations. In contrast, principals, often in conjunction with the senior management team, are responsible for shaping school policies and providing guidelines.

Bryant and Rao (2019) and Edwards-Groves et al. (2019) affirm this distinction, highlighting that middle leaders focus on implementing these policies rather than formulating them.

De Nobile (2018) created a model for middle leaders in schools. It outlines the roles they play ("What?") and how they fulfill them ("How?"). The model includes various roles like management, leadership, student-focused tasks, administration, supervision, and more. Middle leaders achieve these roles by leading teams, managing relationships, time, communication, and themselves. It also considers inputs (on the left) like people and processes affecting middle leaders' work and potential outcomes (on the right) enhancing school effectiveness.

Figure 1

Roles of Middle Leaders in Schools



Source: De Nobile, 2018

Lipscombe et al. (2023) propose that middle leaders operate in a challenging position between teachers and senior leaders, serving as a bridge for influence and change. While scholars generally agree that middle leaders are teachers with leadership roles, there is little

consensus on the importance of their teaching duties versus their leadership responsibilities. For instance, some studies, like Li et al. (2018), exclude teaching from the role of middle leaders. This suggests that middle leadership could encompass individuals with significant pastoral duties, positioned between the organization's head and the teaching staff (Tay et al., 2019).

Fletcher and Bell (1999) found subject leaders to have various roles and responsibilities. These include managing resources, ensuring quality teaching and learning, assessing teacher performance, possessing subject knowledge, and providing professional development tailored to teachers' needs. However, they also face challenges such as limited development time, monitoring constraints, and staff cooperation issues. Bennett et al. (2003) discovered that subject leaders were reluctant to conduct classroom observations and sometimes lacked subject knowledge compared to other teachers. Conversely, Ali and Botha (2006) found in a South African study that subject leaders significantly contribute to school improvement. Poultney's (2007) UK study suggested that subject leaders should be supportive and approachable to teachers but face challenges in delegating tasks.

Meanwhile, there's a scarcity of literature concerning middle leadership in education and the pivotal role middle leaders undertake in driving change and advancement within schools (Lambert, 2023).

Busher and Harris (1999) say that subject leaders play a big part in shaping the culture within their department and the whole school. They agree with Glover et al. (1998) that part of the subject leader's job is to shape and manage the culture of their department. This means they need to empower others and create a culture of teamwork. But Wise and Bush (1999) and Dimmock and Lee (2000) found that while the head of the department has a big influence on

the department's culture, they're also limited by how strong the existing culture is and how much the members of the department identify with their subject.

Zhang, Wong and Wang (2021) underscores the critical role of middle leaders in shaping the processes and outcomes of teachers' learning within school settings. Their adept blending of bureaucratic and professional leadership approaches can drive transformative learning among teachers. Moreover, varying interpretations of middle leaders' roles and the objectives of school-based teacher learning may lead to different combinations of leadership strategies, ultimately influencing the nature and quality of teachers' learning experiences. This insight empowers middle leaders to recognize both the potential strengths and pitfalls of their leadership practices concerning teachers' learning. Additionally, the study suggests that enhancing group leaders' capacity for knowledge brokering can create innovative learning environments for teachers. Therefore, future professional development initiatives for middle leaders should prioritize strategies to improve their ability to build and create knowledge effectively.

School leaders facilitate teaching and learning indirectly by influencing teachers' professional development and the conditions of their work (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins 2020). Middle leaders, due to their proximity to the classroom, are particularly well-positioned to positively impact teacher learning (Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer, and Ronnerman 2016; LaPointe-McEwan, DeLuca, and Klinger 2017). Research indicates that one of the key responsibilities of middle leaders as instructional leaders is promoting teacher professional development (Bryant and Walker 2022; Leithwood 2016). However, there is a need to better understand how middle leaders enact instructional leadership to build teacher capacity, especially in non-Western contexts (Bryant, Wong, and Adames 2020; Hairon, Goh, and Chua

2015). More research is necessary across diverse sociocultural and organizational settings to explore the varied understandings and practices middle leaders employ to enhance teacher capacity (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins, 2020).

2.5. Factors affecting middle leadership

2.5.1. Organization culture and hierarchy

Teacher leadership faces challenges in fostering collaboration, especially in traditional, top-down management systems. Research indicates that bureaucratic and hierarchical school cultures can impede teacher leadership by hindering collaboration, learning, and development (Murphy, 2007; Sanocki, 2013).

Teachers may feel disconnected from their peers and resentful towards teacher leadership roles, viewing them as extensions of top management. Bureaucratic structures often prioritize control and accountability over collaboration, making it challenging to achieve common goals and foster a collaborative work environment (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Department structures can make it hard to change things, and colleagues within the department have a big influence on how things are done. When heads of departments feel that what their bosses expect clashes with what their colleagues expect, they usually side with their colleagues instead of their bosses (Wise and Bush, 1999). This supports Dimmock and Lee's (2000) idea that strong department structures sometimes mean the principal doesn't have enough control over what's taught.

The conflict between working as equals and following a hierarchy keeps coming up. Some studies show that senior managers tend to treat middle leaders in a top-down way (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 2000; Glover & Miller, 1999), which might make it tough for middle

leaders to help improve the whole school (Glover & Miller, 1999). Even though senior leaders have been giving more tasks to middle leaders (Glover et al., 1998), these studies still see these changes as part of a top-down system. Some studies also notice a shift towards more teamwork (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 2000).

One area that hasn't been studied much is how middle leaders manage their own workload and emotions. This includes handling stress, pressure, and other challenges they face in their roles (Bassett & Shaw, 2018; Ghamrawi et al., 2013). Silva et al. (2000) highlight how organizational characteristics can negatively affect the work of teacher leaders, such as administrative workload and lack of autonomy and support, leading to burnout and isolation (Harris & Muijs, 2004). Middle leaders often face significant pressure due to the numerous responsibilities assigned to them (Desouky & Allam, 2017). Heavy workloads can cause teachers to become unhappy with their profession, making the school environment less effective and productive, and lowering their performance (Kaur, 2017). Being able to negotiate effectively is also important for middle leaders to do their jobs well (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Tang et al., 2022). The ambiguity surrounding the roles of middle leaders has resulted in significant tensions and conflicts, adversely affecting both their performance and overall well-being. The additional responsibilities assigned to them often overlap with the duties of other school personnel. Irvine and Brundrett (2016) noted the detrimental impact of undefined role specifications on the accomplishments of middle leaders. The study revealed that unclear role definitions lead to challenges in time management and effective planning. Furthermore, it facilitated an unchecked expansion of responsibilities and the development of conflicts due to overlapping roles with other school staff.

2.5.2. Principal

The success of middle leadership hinges significantly on various factors, among which the role of the school principal stands out. Principals are pivotal in fostering cultures that uphold and sustain middle leadership roles (Edwards-Groves et al., 2019). These cultures should advocate for participatory decision-making (Benoliel et al., 2021), foster collegiality and collaboration (Highfield & Rubie-Davies, 2022), and steer clear of bureaucratic practices (Bush, 2019). Empowerment and autonomy, grounded in trust, are also identified as crucial elements for nurturing such cultures (Ainsworth et al., 2022; Barry et al., 2022). Portin et al. (2009) found that principals and senior leaders are essential in supporting teacher leaders. When they work closely together, students benefit academically, and the school environment shapes the work of teacher leaders.

2.5.3. Clarity of the role

The effectiveness of middle leadership is significantly impacted by the clarity surrounding the role itself. Hirsh and Bergmo-Prvulovic (2018) highlight that middle leadership assignments are frequently ambiguous and lacking in definition. Similarly, Irvine and Brundrett (2016) assert that middle leadership roles often lack clear boundaries, resulting in challenges in delineation. As a result, the role tends to be adaptable, potentially overloading middle leaders with extra tasks and duties. Although there's plenty of research on stress, there's not much on how stress affects education, especially middle leadership, which hasn't been studied or theorized much (De Nobile, 2018). Based on research by Ball et al., (2012) middle leadership is a complex role where people negotiate within professional networks. These negotiations happen in specific situations that keep changing, affecting what middle leaders can do. The study says that middle leaders have many different relationships. They

deal with people above them, below them, and alongside them. These relationships are not straightforward and vary from person to person. In colleges and universities, middle leadership means taking care of some management jobs while reporting to higher-ups. These jobs can include being a department head or a coordinator. But, even though these roles are important, what middle leaders actually do can be unclear. Research shows that middle leaders often face conflicting demands. They have to be loyal to their department while also following the rules of the university. This can create tension between doing what the university wants and what the department needs.

Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2005) point out three conflicting demands in the role of middle leaders: collegiality, professionalism, and authority. Collegiality emphasizes open communication to build trust among colleagues. On the other hand, professionalism requires middle leaders to ensure that everyone meets professional standards and to monitor their performance. While building professional skills relies on trust, formal monitoring may strain it. Lastly, authority raises questions about why others should follow the middle leader's instructions, as authority often leads to compliance, as noted by Perloff (2010). It is imperative for school leaders to have a precise understanding of their roles, especially given the substantial changes in middle leader positions in recent years. Clarity regarding the key aspects and outcomes of their roles is crucial. However, position descriptions are often overly generic and comprehensive, failing to provide specific guidance on individual responsibilities. This lack of clarity can impede leaders' ability to focus their efforts effectively. Ensuring that each leader's responsibilities are clearly defined is essential for optimizing the use of their time and ensuring that they are engaged in activities directly related to their roles (Francis, 2023).

It's common for middle leaders to feel stuck between senior management, who they answer to, and their subordinates, who they're responsible for, according to Marshall's (2012) study. Similarly, Lapp and Carr (2006) describe middle leaders as both leaders and followers, balancing different roles. These dynamics highlight the importance of relationships in middle leadership. Induction programs for new leaders aim to achieve three main goals: preparing them for their new role, helping them transition from teachers to leaders, and providing them with necessary managerial skills (Bush, 2018). According to Sobri et al. (2018), effective school leadership demands a blend of social adeptness and professional competence. Hence, induction programs for new school leaders are vital to equip them with the necessary skills for their roles. Similarly, Amour and Doniel (2019) stress the importance of inducting newly appointed school heads to familiarize them with their duties and integrate them into the school community. Many countries adhere to this practice of inducting new leaders before they officially assume their positions.

Wieczorek and Manard (2018) highlight the formidable challenges in managing schools, especially in areas with limited resources and low levels of education awareness. To address this, school leaders require comprehensive training and knowledge, which can be provided through induction programs. Arifin et al. (2018) found that integrating local culture into induction programs enhances school leaders' effectiveness, as seen in Indonesia. However, concerns have been raised in African countries, such as those expressed by Ndubuisi and Jacob (2021), about the theoretical nature of some induction programs, which may not adequately prepare school leaders for practical challenges.

In Tanzania, Amos and Koda (2018) discovered that school heads often lack sufficient understanding of their roles in clinical supervision, underscoring the need for further training

in school management. This knowledge gap may be attributed to the selection process, where school heads are typically appointed from teaching staff without prior management experience. Consequently, the Tanzanian government has mandated induction programs for newly appointed school heads. Sulemana (2018) emphasizes the importance of these programs for the professional growth of new officials.

There is a notable gap in the literature concerning the induction of middle leaders within the Arab context, despite its significance. This gap is particularly important to address due to the cultural and linguistic aspects specific to the region.

2.5.4. Training

Identifying what teachers need to improve is key for effective training programs. These needs show where teachers need help in doing their job better (Witte & Jansen, 2016). Different perspectives see these needs as a mix of factors affecting how trainees behave (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). In education, training is seen as a planned set of learning opportunities for teachers to boost their performance at work (Haris, 1980). Research highlights how essential quality training is for effective middle leadership. This could mean structured training programs (Lipscombe et al., 2020) or setups created by principals to help middle leaders grow while on the job (Bryant & Walker, 2022; Thurlings et al., 2015).

2.5.5. Building effective relationships

Building effective relationships is vital for middle leaders. Research links strong, supportive relationships with teaching staff to the success of middle leaders in their positions (Liljenberg, 2016). Establishing relationships within a school setting can be complicated by internal politics, especially when middle leaders are promoted from within the teaching ranks

(McCulla & Degenhardt, 2016). Such advancements can be seen as a threat by current heads of year, creating challenges for the newly appointed middle leaders. Edwards-Groves et al. (2016) highlighted that heads of year often worry that the promotion of middle leaders undermines their own roles. This resistance can obstruct middle leaders from effectively fulfilling their duties. De Nobile (2019) refers to this as the 'tall poppy syndrome,' where middle leaders face opposition, resistance, or even undermining from their peers due to their new positions.

2.5.6. Experience and skills

Research by Turner (2000) indicates that the appointment of department heads is often based on seniority and performance during interviews, reflecting a form of self-promotion. Turner (2000) observed that department heads learn from more experienced colleagues and view them as role models, in addition to benefiting from leadership and management workshops. To excel in their leadership roles, department heads (HoDs) require specific competencies and skills to effectively fulfill their responsibilities for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. Bak (2010) highlighted the importance of interpersonal skills, administrative tasks, subject knowledge, curriculum design, supervision and evaluation, and continuous professional development for HoDs. Similarly, Stephenson (2010) outlined essential skills and competencies for HoDs, including subject knowledge, assessment expertise, pedagogical understanding, shared vision, strategic planning, team development, managing people, effective communication, time management, and delegation skills. According to Fairman & Mackenzie (2012), educators in leadership positions demonstrate proficient interpersonal communication abilities, exhibit a propensity to challenge established norms, and exhibit problem-solving skills when faced with conflicts.

2.6. Teacher leadership models and theories

Effective leadership is crucial for the success of any organization, including schools. Among the different leadership theories, transformational leadership stands out as a particularly effective approach, capable of driving substantial improvements in numerous sectors, including education (Pennell, 2023). Transformational leadership, as described by Kouzes (2009), involves principals who can elevate their schools to new heights during pivotal development phases. The journey of school innovation is not always smooth; it varies under different circumstances and factors. Sometimes progress is made, other times it stalls, and in the worst cases, it regresses. Naturally, we all prefer progress over stagnation or regression. Emphasizing transformational leadership, it is anticipated that principals will create conditions that inspire all school members through their advanced leadership, ultimately steering the school out of chaos and achieving improvement during challenging times. Therefore, transformational leadership is an essential quality for principals (Yang, 2014).

Various scholars have also put forth models of professional development. For instance, Pill (2005) discusses and assesses four models utilized in training higher education instructors: the Reflective Practitioner, Action Research, Novice to Expert, and Metacognitive approaches. In a similar vein, Kennedy (2014) presents nine models of professional development, which he organizes into three groups—transmission, transitional, and transformative—based on their ability to support professional independence and transformative practices. Within the transmission group are models such as training, award-bearing, deficit, and cascade. The transitional category includes standards-based, coaching/mentoring, and community of practice models. The transformative category encompasses action research and transformative

models. Kennedy (2014) contends that a model's support for autonomy increases as one transitions from transmission to transitional and then transformative categories.

In the modern era, distributed leadership has emerged as the favored model (Bush, 2019). Distributed leadership theory and teacher leadership connect through three key points. First, they involve different groups working together to change how teaching is done in a school. Second, teacher leadership means that many people take on leadership roles, and how they work together shows how leadership functions. Lastly, interdependency is crucial, showing how leaders share responsibilities across different roles (Muijs & Harris, 2003). Unlike traditional top-down approaches where one individual holds all decision-making power, distributed leadership emphasizes decentralization (Holloway et al., 2018), allowing leadership to permeate throughout the entire school. According to Gronn (2002), leadership potential exists within the everyday activities of organizational members. Distributed leadership redistributes power and authority within the school, operating on the belief that everyone has the capacity to lead and that leadership should be shared (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Collaboration is integral to distributed leadership, with teachers working together in teams to plan lessons, co-teach, share resources, and provide mutual support for change and improvement. This collaborative approach fosters the construction of knowledge and the demonstration of collective leadership, effectively showcasing teacher leadership.

2.7. Literature gap

While Western contexts have been extensively studied, there is a notable lack of research focusing on teacher leadership within Arab educational settings, where educational leadership often remains undefined and culturally nuanced (Hallinger & Hammad, 2017; Sellami et al., 2015). Research on middle leadership highlights its critical role in bridging

senior management and teaching staff, and in driving school reforms (Bryan, 2017; Bush, 2016). However, there is limited consensus on their specific responsibilities and a clear distinction between their teaching and leadership roles (Lipscombe et al., 2021; De Nobile, 2018). Moreover, while professional development is recognized as essential for enhancing teacher capacity (Bryant & Walker, 2022; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020), there is a significant gap in understanding how middle leaders enact instructional leadership in non-Western contexts (Bryant, Wong, & Adames, 2020). The cultural and organizational differences in Arab countries, with their distinct educational terminologies and frameworks, necessitate tailored research to explore effective professional development strategies (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Ahmed, 2012).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the effectiveness of professional development for middle leaders in Arabic subjects in private schools in Dubai. The methodology is crucial in ensuring the research objectives are met systematically and accurately.

3.1. Research design

For this research, a survey method was employed for primary data collection using two self-administered questionnaires. Survey questions were part of a published thesis for Kavanagh (2020). Self-administered questionnaires allow participants to complete the survey on their own, which can enhance the accuracy and honesty of responses. These questionnaires were adapted from the original one to reflect the research objectives and included both demographic questions and items based on validated and reliable instruments (Ponto, 2015).

Two self-designed questionnaires with close-ended questions were utilized: one for teachers and one for middle leaders. Each questionnaire was designed by items drawn from the literature on teacher leadership practices. The questionnaires were distributed in the private schools of Dubai.

For this research, convenience sampling was employed due to its practicality in accessing the research context, participants, and aligning with the methodological framework (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Convenience sampling involves creating inclusion criteria and approaching any available member of the target population who meets these criteria. Participants who consent to take part are then selected and added to the sample.

This approach is justified because it allows for efficient and straightforward data collection, especially when the researcher has limited time or resources. For example, Golzar et al. (2022) utilized convenience sampling in their study on Afghan English teachers' and students' perceptions of formative assessment. Their research aimed to develop a perception scale for formative assessment and explore the relationship between teachers and students' perceptions.

Similarly, convenience sampling in this study ensures that relevant and accessible participants are included, facilitating the collection of primary data from private schools in Dubai effectively. Responses from 70 teachers and 70 middle leaders were selected based on a single inclusion criterion that is completion of the survey.

3.2. Data collection methods

Primary data was gathered through self-administered questionnaires distributed separately to teachers and middle leaders. This approach ensured that the responses accurately reflected the perspectives of each group regarding the professional development opportunities available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects and their impact.

For secondary data and literature review, a strategic and systematic approach was employed to identify and gather relevant information. Reputable sources such as Google Scholar, Google Search Engine, and ProQuest were extensively utilized. The process involved using specific keyword search strings to ensure the retrieval of pertinent and high-quality documents. Keywords and phrases such as "professional development for middle leaders," "Arabic subject leadership," "impact of professional development in education," "middle leadership in Dubai schools," and "educational leadership training programs" were used.

The search strings were carefully crafted to include various combinations and variations to capture a broad spectrum of relevant literature. For example, searches on Google Scholar and ProQuest included terms like "impact of professional development on middle leaders AND Arabic subjects" and "professional development opportunities for teachers AND Dubai private schools." Additionally, Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were used to refine the searches and exclude irrelevant results.

The initial search results were screened for relevance by reviewing titles and abstracts. Full texts of the selected documents were then obtained and thoroughly reviewed to ensure their alignment with the research objectives. This meticulous approach was essential for providing a comprehensive contextual background and supporting the primary data findings with credible and relevant secondary data.

By integrating both primary and secondary data, the study ensured a robust and well-rounded analysis of the professional development opportunities for middle leaders in Arabic subjects and their subsequent impact as perceived by both leaders and teachers. The combined data sources enriched the research, offering a deeper understanding of the current state and effectiveness of professional development initiatives in this specific educational context.

3.3. Data analysis methods

For this research, the researcher used SPSS 20 for statistical analysis. SPSS is known for its user-friendly features that make it accessible to researchers from various fields such as sociology, psychology, economics, business studies, medicine, and engineering (Levesque, 2007). Its powerful capabilities include data management and documentation, which are crucial for handling large volumes of data commonly collected from surveys (Jasrai, 2020).

Despite the availability of several alternatives, SPSS remains a preferred choice for many researchers because of its superior usability and comprehensive features (Arkkelin, 2014). In social science research, quantitative methods are employed to explore how changes in one variable (the independent variable) influence another variable (the dependent variable) within a population. Researchers can alter or control the values of the independent variable to observe its effects on the dependent variable (Niño-Zarazúa, 2012).

In contemporary social science research, quantitative data analysis is a critical component, and a wide array of software packages are available to facilitate this analysis. Among these are R, PSPP, Stata, SAS, SPlus, JASP, and BMDP, each offering various features and capabilities (NYU, 2021). While some of these software options are open source and others require commercial licenses, even widely used tools like Microsoft Excel offer quantitative data analysis through add-on modules. However, these alternatives often lack the user-friendly interface that SPSS provides. Many educational and non-educational institutions prefer SPSS due to its intuitive design and ease of use (Ong and Puteh, 2017). Although SPSS may not be the ultimate tool for all quantitative data analysis needs, it has distinct advantages that make it a popular choice among researchers. Unlike some software packages that may have superior features, SPSS is accessible across all major computer platforms, including Windows, MacOS, and Linux (URI, 2019).

3.4. Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines were meticulously followed throughout the study to ensure the integrity and ethical standards of the research process. Participants were given clear, accessible information about the purpose, methods, and intended uses of the research. Consent

was obtained freely without any coercion or undue pressure. Participants were made aware of their right to refuse participation at any time without any penalty or need to provide a reason.

The identity of the participants was protected through anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity was maintained by separating personal details from survey responses, ensuring that individuals could not be identified from the information provided. Confidentiality meant that while identification was possible, only the researchers had access to personal information, which was securely stored and protected.

By embedding ethical considerations into the research design from the onset, the study not only upheld high ethical standards but also increased the validity and rigor of the research findings (Halej, 2017).

3.5. Limitations and delimitations

3.5.1. Limitations

One significant limitation of this study is the potential for response bias due to the self-administered nature of the questionnaires. Since participants filled out the surveys on their own without researcher supervision, there is a possibility that their answers may not accurately reflect their true opinions or behaviors. Participants might have been influenced by social desirability, choosing responses they perceived as more acceptable or favorable rather than being completely honest. Additionally, without a researcher present to clarify any misunderstandings or ambiguities in the questions, participants might have misinterpreted some items, leading to inaccurate or inconsistent responses (Wetzel et al., 2016).

3.5.2. Delimitations

The study deliberately focuses on private schools in Dubai, excluding public schools and schools from other regions. This delimitation is set to ensure a more manageable and focused scope for the research, allowing for a deeper exploration of teacher leadership practices within a specific educational context. By concentrating on private schools in Dubai, the research aims to generate insights that are directly relevant to this sector, acknowledging that educational environments and leadership practices may differ significantly between private and public institutions, as well as across different geographic locations. This choice of delimitation ensures that the study's findings are contextually relevant but also means that the results may not be generalizable to public schools or schools in other regions.

Chapter 4: Data analysis, interpretation and discussion

4.1. Descriptives

4.1.1. Professional development course by middle leaders

Table 1

Did you engage in any professional development courses to prepare you for the middle leader position?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	52	74.3	74.3	74.3
	No	18	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The responses indicate the distribution of Middle Leaders based on their engagement in professional development courses specifically designed to prepare them for their Middle Leader positions. 52 Middle Leaders reported participating in professional development courses to prepare for their roles. This group represents 74.3% of the total respondents. These individuals actively sought out additional training or educational opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge necessary for effectively fulfilling their Middle Leader responsibilities. 18 Middle Leaders did not engage in any professional development courses targeted at preparing them for their Middle Leader positions. They represent 25.7% of the total respondents. These individuals either relied on their existing skills and experiences or did not have access to or choose to pursue formal training opportunities for their Middle Leader roles. These responses provide insight into the extent to which Middle Leaders in the sample

proactively sought out professional development opportunities to support their leadership roles within their respective organizations.

4.1.2. Middle leader's experience as teacher

Table 2

How many years of experience had as a teacher?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	7-9 years	15	21.4	21.4	21.4
	more than 9 years	55	78.6	78.6	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

This data indicates the distribution of respondents based on their years of experience as a teacher before assuming the middle leader position. Out of the total respondents, 21.4% reported having 7-9 years of teaching experience, while the majority, 78.6%, had more than 9 years of teaching experience.

This suggests that the majority of middle leaders in Arabic subjects have a significant amount of teaching experience prior to taking on leadership roles. The findings imply that middle leaders typically bring a wealth of teaching expertise and classroom experience to their leadership positions, which can potentially contribute to their effectiveness in leading teams and driving educational initiatives.

Table 3

How many years of experience had you when you were appointed as a middle leader?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-1 years	9	12.9	12.9	12.9
	1-2 years	17	24.3	24.3	37.1
	3-4 years	40	57.1	57.1	94.3
	4-5 years	4	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

This data displays the distribution of respondents based on the number of years of experience they had at the time of their appointment as middle leaders. 12.9% of respondents had 0-1 years of experience, 24.3% had 1-2 years of experience, and the majority, comprising 57.1% of respondents, had 3-4 years of experience. Additionally, a small proportion (5.7%) had 4-5 years of experience.

These findings indicate that there is variation in the level of experience among individuals appointed as middle leaders. While a significant portion of middle leaders had 3-4 years of experience, a notable number also had less than 2 years of experience. This diversity in experience levels suggests that schools may appoint middle leaders with varying levels of experience, potentially bringing a mix of fresh perspectives and seasoned expertise to their leadership roles.

4.1.3. Teacher's experience

Table 4

How many years of experience had as a teacher?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-1 years	48	68.6	68.6	68.6
	1-2 years	19	27.1	27.1	95.7
	3-4 years	3	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

This data represents the years of experience respondents had as teachers before the time of the survey. 68.6% of the respondents reported having 0-1 years of experience as teachers. This indicates that the majority of respondents were relatively new to the teaching profession. 27.1% of the respondents had 1-2 years of teaching experience, suggesting that a significant portion had gained some experience but were still early in their teaching careers. Only 4.3% of the respondents had 3-4 years of teaching experience, indicating that a small minority had been teaching for a relatively longer duration compared to the majority.

Overall, the data reflects a distribution of teaching experience among the respondents, with the majority having relatively limited experience in the field.

4.2. Types of professional development opportunities are available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects

Table 5

Please list any professional development you engaged in after the middle leader position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Training Courses on teaching pedagogy	20	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Training Courses on leadership	17	24.3	24.3	52.9
	Leadership Management	7	10.0	10.0	62.9
	Self-Evaluation & Improvement based on UAE Inspection Framework for Readers	3	4.3	4.3	67.1
	Coaching and mentoring	4	5.7	5.7	72.9
	Course in SPEA for Middle leader	5	7.1	7.1	80.0
	Cambridge educational leadership course	6	8.6	8.6	88.6
	None	8	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Based on the data provided, the professional development opportunities available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects encompass a range of areas aimed at enhancing their teaching and leadership skills.

The most prevalent type of professional development reported by participants is training courses on teaching pedagogy, with 28.6% of respondents engaging in such programs. This indicates a strong emphasis on improving instructional methods and approaches among middle leaders in Arabic subjects.

Following closely are training courses on leadership, with 24.3% of respondents participating in such programs. This suggests a recognition of the importance of leadership skills in effectively managing and guiding teams within educational settings.

Additionally, a notable percentage of respondents (10.0%) reported engaging in leadership management programs, indicating a specific focus on honing skills related to organizational leadership and management practices.

A smaller proportion of respondents reported engaging in self-evaluation and improvement based on UAE Inspection Framework for Readers (4.3%), coaching and mentoring (5.7%), courses in SPEA for Middle Leader (7.1%), and Cambridge educational leadership courses (8.6%). These findings suggest a diverse array of professional development opportunities available to middle leaders, catering to various aspects of their roles and responsibilities.

However, it is worth noting that a significant portion of respondents (11.4%) reported not engaging in any professional development activities after assuming the middle leader position. This highlights a potential area for improvement in ensuring that all middle leaders

have access to continuous professional learning opportunities to support their growth and effectiveness in their roles.

The chi-square test results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the types of further qualifications obtained by middle leaders and their initial teaching degree ($p = 0.000$). This suggests that the distribution of additional qualifications is not random and may be influenced by factors related to the middle leaders' initial teaching degrees.

In summary, while professional diplomas and training courses are less common among middle leaders, the majority have pursued master's degrees as further qualifications after their initial teaching degree. This underscores the importance of advanced education in the professional development of middle leaders.

Table 6

Please list any further qualifications you achieved after your initial teaching degree, if any.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Professional diploma in methods of teaching an academic subject in the Arabic language	18	25.7	25.7	25.7
	Training courses	6	8.6	8.6	34.3
	Masters	14	20.0	20.0	54.3
	Bachelors	15	21.4	21.4	75.7
	Teachers Licence	4	5.7	5.7	81.4

	Certificate	13	18.6	18.6	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

When asked from teachers if they pursued any additional degree or course after the initial teaching degree majority (25.7%) mentioned about Professional diploma in methods of teaching an academic subject in the Arabic language followed by Bachelors (21.4) and Masters (20%).

The chi-square test results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the types of additional qualifications acquired and the respondents' initial teaching degrees ($p = 0.025$). This suggests that the distribution of further qualifications is not random and may be influenced by factors associated with the respondents' initial teaching degrees.

In summary, while respondents pursued various additional qualifications, there is a trend towards obtaining professional diplomas, master's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and certificates subsequent to their initial teaching degree. However, the prevalence of specific qualifications varies among respondents, suggesting diverse paths in their professional development.

4.3. Impact of these opportunities from the perspectives of both leaders and teachers

Table 7

Did this/these courses prepare you for the middle leader position?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	62	88.6	88.6	88.6
	No	8	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

When asked the Middle Leaders if the courses prepared them for the position, among the respondents, 88.6% of middle leaders indicated that the courses they took prepared them for the middle leader position, while 11.4% felt otherwise.

Table 8

Did this/these courses prepare you for your day-to day activities at the school as a teacher?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	65	92.9	92.9	92.9
	No	5	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

On the other hand, 92.9% of teachers mentioned that the professional development courses they took prepared them for their day-to-day activities at school. A minority of 5

teachers felt that the courses did not prepare them adequately for their day-to-day activities. This constitutes 7.1% of the respondents.

Table 9

Current role and responsibilities of middle leaders

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Leading to development	5	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Team Leader	6	8.6	8.6	15.7
	Primary team leader	4	5.7	5.7	21.4
	Design thinking leader	3	4.3	4.3	25.7
	Lesson and Assignment development	4	5.7	5.7	31.4
	Strategic Leader	3	4.3	4.3	35.7
	Arabic Leader	35	50.0	50.0	85.7
	Non-Arabic Leader	2	2.9	2.9	88.6
	Academic Supervisor	4	5.7	5.7	94.3
	HOD	4	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The data for Middle Leaders illustrates the distribution of roles among the respondents. The majority (50%) identified as Arabic Leaders, followed by Team Leaders (8.6%), Primary Team Leaders (5.7%), and others. The findings from the current study corroborate De Nobile's (2018) model, illustrating that middle leaders fulfill a wide array of roles that are crucial for

enhancing school effectiveness. The results also emphasize the importance of context-specific roles, such as language-specific leadership, which are particularly relevant in the Arab region. This highlights the need for professional development tailored to the unique challenges and responsibilities middle leaders face in different educational settings.

- **Discussion**

Middle leaders play a crucial role in how teachers learn at school. Their mix of leadership styles can really help teachers adapt and change. Also, how middle leaders see their role and what they want teachers to learn can affect the way they lead, which impacts how teachers learn (Zhang, Wong and Wang, 2021). This study conducted in China provides valuable insights into how middle leaders can support teachers' learning and development in school settings. While the cultural setting and language may differ between China and the Arab region, the challenges faced by teachers and leaders in navigating these contexts could be similar. For instance, the need for effective communication and understanding of cultural nuances is essential for promoting collaboration and facilitating learning among educators, regardless of the specific cultural context. Therefore, the findings from the Chinese study can still offer relevant lessons for middle leaders in the Arab region as they seek to enhance teachers' professional growth and create conducive learning environments.

Table 10

Current role and responsibilities of teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Arabic language teacher	58	82.9	82.9	82.9
	Teacher and coordinator	12	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Out of the total 70 respondents, the majority, 58 teachers, reported their role as Arabic language teachers. This group makes up 82.9% of the respondents. The remaining 12 respondents, accounting for 17.1% of the total, reported that their role includes being both a teacher and a coordinator. This dual role combines regular teaching duties with additional responsibilities in coordinating activities or managing certain aspects of the educational program. This breakdown highlights the predominant role of Arabic language instruction within the surveyed group while also acknowledging the presence of teachers who take on additional coordination duties.

Table 11

Did you receive any formal induction after taking up the middle leader position?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	60	85.7	85.7	85.7
	No	10	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

85.7% of responded that Middle Leaders received formal induction after assuming the middle leader position, while 14.3% did not.

Table 12

Did this induction support you in understanding your role?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	50	71.4	71.4	71.4
	No	10	14.3	14.3	85.7
	NA	10	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Regarding whether the induction helped them understand their role, 71.4% responded affirmatively, while 14.3% said no, and another 14.3% responses were not applicable as those were the ones who did not receive induction. Previous studies (Sobri et al., 2018; Amour and Doniel, 2019) have underscored the importance of induction programs for new school leaders, emphasizing their role in preparing leaders and facilitating their integration into the school

community. The current study's findings regarding the effectiveness of induction programs in aiding leaders' understanding of their roles align with these past findings.

Table 13

Did you receive as a teacher any formal induction after appointing a middle leader in your department?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	58	82.9	82.9	82.9
	No	12	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

On the other hand, out of the 70 teachers surveyed, 58 teachers, which represents 82.9% of the respondents, reported receiving a formal induction after a Middle Leader was appointed in their department. This high percentage suggests that formal induction programs are a common practice following such appointments, aimed at integrating and informing teachers about changes in leadership and potentially new expectations or procedures. In contrast, 12 teachers, or 17.1% of the respondents, indicated that they did not receive any formal induction. This indicates a minority of the departments might lack structured induction processes or that some teachers were not included in these programs.

Table 14

Did this induction support you in understanding your role as a teacher?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	49	70.0	70.0	70.0
	No	9	12.9	12.9	82.9
	NA	12	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the effectiveness of the induction in helping teachers understand their roles, 49 teachers (70.0%) felt that the induction they received supported them in understanding their role better. This demonstrates that, for a majority, the induction process was beneficial and effectively communicated necessary information and expectations. However, 9 teachers (12.9%) reported that the induction did not support them in understanding their role. This suggests that while the induction was generally effective, there were gaps or inadequacies that left some teachers without the clarity or support they needed. Additionally, 12 teachers (17.1%) selected "NA" (not applicable), which likely corresponds to those who did not receive any formal induction (as indicated in the first set of data). This group did not experience the induction process, thus they could not comment on its effectiveness.

Table 15

Did you get a job description outlining your roles and responsibilities as a middle leader?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	28	40.0	40.0	40.0
	No	2	2.9	2.9	42.9
	Maybe	40	57.1	57.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

On asking about the clarity of job description of Middle Leaders, this data highlights that a significant portion of respondents did not have clarity or certainty regarding whether they received a job description outlining their roles and responsibilities as a Middle Leader. This lack of clarity or uncertainty, represented by the "Maybe" responses, suggests a potential gap in the onboarding process or communication within the organization.

- **Discussion**

Clear job descriptions are essential for employees to understand their roles, responsibilities, and expectations, which can significantly impact their performance and effectiveness. Addressing this issue may require enhancements in onboarding, communication protocols, or documentation practices within the organization to ensure Middle Leaders receive the necessary guidance and information. This is especially important given the substantial changes in middle leader positions in recent years. Often, position descriptions are overly generic, failing to provide specific guidance on individual responsibilities, which can hinder leaders' ability to focus their efforts effectively. Clearly defining each leader's

responsibilities is crucial for optimizing their time and ensuring they engage in activities directly related to their roles (Francis, 2023).

Table 16

What was the biggest challenges that you faced in this position as a middle leader?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-arabic students	3	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Power Overlap	12	17.1	17.1	21.4
	Lack of clarity in role	15	21.4	21.4	42.9
	Meeting Expectations	7	10.0	10.0	52.9
	Workload	27	38.6	38.6	91.4
	Teaching and Leading simultaneously	3	4.3	4.3	95.7
	Meeting parents	3	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The biggest challenges faced by individuals in the Middle Leader position include a variety of issues, with the most significant being workload, reported by 38.6% of respondents. This indicates that managing the volume of tasks and responsibilities is the primary difficulty for many Middle Leaders. Following this, 21.4% of respondents cited a lack of clarity in their roles, highlighting confusion or uncertainty about their specific duties and expectations. Power overlap, or conflicts in authority, was mentioned by 17.1%, while meeting expectations posed a challenge for 10%. Additional challenges included dealing with non-Arabic students,

teaching and leading simultaneously, and meeting parents, each reported by 4.3% of respondents. These findings suggest that Middle Leaders face multifaceted challenges that require organizational support and clearer role definitions to enhance their effectiveness and job satisfaction.

The Chi-Square Test for Goodness of Fit, with a chi-square value of 47.400 and a p-value of .000, indicates that the observed distribution of challenges significantly differs from what would be expected by chance. This suggests that certain challenges are more prevalent among Middle Leaders. The findings imply that workload is a substantial issue for Middle Leaders, indicating a potential strain on their capacity to manage their responsibilities effectively. The significant number of leaders reporting a lack of clarity in their roles suggests that confusion and ambiguity about job expectations are prevalent. The challenge of power overlap indicates that many leaders might be experiencing conflicts or redundancies in their responsibilities. The relatively low frequency of challenges such as dealing with non-Arabic students, managing simultaneous teaching and leading roles, and meeting parents suggest these are less common but still relevant issues that some leaders face.

- **Discussion**

These findings are in line with Kaur (2017) who states that middle leaders often find themselves under significant pressure due to the multitude of tasks assigned to them, ranging from lesson planning to student evaluation. This heavy workload can lead to dissatisfaction among teachers, ultimately affecting the effectiveness and productivity of the school environment, as well as their own performance (Kaur, 2017). The lack of clear roles for middle leaders has led to tensions and conflicts that negatively affect their performance and overall well-being. Many of their additional responsibilities overlap with those of other school

staff (Ghamrawi, Shal, & Ghamrawi, 2023). Brundrett (2016) highlighted the harmful effects of vague role definitions on middle leaders' achievements. This study found that unclear role specifications caused issues in time management and effective planning. Moreover, it contributed to an expanding workload and conflicts due to overlapping duties with other school members.

Table 17

How did you overcome these challenges?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Communicating and Listening	24	34.3	34.3	34.3
	Teamwork and Resource Allocation	7	10.0	10.0	44.3
	Planning and Patience	8	11.4	11.4	55.7
	perseverance or consistency	8	11.4	11.4	67.1
	Time management and priortising	4	5.7	5.7	72.9
	Support from team	16	22.9	22.9	95.7
	Innovation	3	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The Chi-Square test result is statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that there is a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies for the different strategies used to overcome challenges. This means that certain strategies were significantly more or less utilized than what would be expected by chance.

- Communicating and Listening: This strategy had a much higher observed frequency (24) than expected (10), with a residual of 14. This indicates that communicating and listening were significantly more utilized than other strategies, highlighting its critical importance for Middle Leaders in overcoming challenges.
- Support from Team: With an observed frequency of 16 and a residual of 6, support from the team was also significantly more used than expected, emphasizing the value of teamwork and collaboration.
- Innovation, Time Management and Prioritizing: These strategies were underutilized compared to the expected frequency, with observed counts of 3 and 4 respectively, and negative residuals. This suggests these approaches were less frequently relied upon by Middle Leaders to overcome challenges.

Table 18

What was the biggest challenges that you faced in this position as a teacher?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-arabic students	13	18.6	18.6	18.6
	Inexperienced Teachers	8	11.4	11.4	30.0
	Lack of guidance	10	14.3	14.3	44.3
	Meeting Expectations	12	17.1	17.1	61.4
	Improving teams skills	15	21.4	21.4	82.9
	Workload	12	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The analysis of the challenges faced by teachers shows that the responses are relatively evenly distributed among the categories, including Non-Arabic students (13 responses), Inexperienced Teachers (8), Lack of Guidance (10), Meeting Expectations (12), Improving Team Skills (15), and Workload (12), with none of these differences being statistically significant (Chi-Square = 2.514, df = 5, p = 0.774). The residuals indicate minor deviations from expected frequencies, but these variations do not suggest any single challenge is overwhelmingly predominant, highlighting that teachers face a broad range of challenges in their positions. This is in contrary to the results of Middle Leaders who encounter significant challenges primarily related to workload and role clarity, with overlapping responsibilities also being a common issue. These insights highlight areas where Middle Leaders may need more support or clearer guidelines to manage their roles effectively.

Table 19

How did you overcome these challenges?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Communicating	37	52.9	52.9	52.9
	Supporting	14	20.0	20.0	72.9
	using different teaching and assessments techniques	4	5.7	5.7	78.6
	perseverance or consistency	3	4.3	4.3	82.9
	Time management and priortising	4	5.7	5.7	88.6
	Support from team	1	1.4	1.4	90.0
	No challenge faced	7	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The analysis of how teachers overcame challenges reveals significant variation in their responses, with a Chi-Square value of 95.600 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating these differences are statistically significant. The majority of teachers cited "Communicating" as their primary strategy (37 responses), far exceeding the expected count of 10 and resulting in a high residual of 27. Other strategies included "Supporting" (14 responses), "using different teaching and assessment techniques" (4), "perseverance or consistency" (3), "Time management and prioritizing" (4), and "Support from team" (1), all of which fell below the

expected count. Additionally, 7 teachers reported facing no challenges. These results highlight that communication is overwhelmingly the most common method for overcoming challenges among teachers, while other strategies are used less frequently.

- **Discussion**

These findings imply that both teachers and middle leaders predominantly rely on communication to navigate their challenges, underscoring the critical importance of effective interpersonal skills. Middle leaders also significantly value team support, indicating a strong reliance on collaborative efforts. However, the underutilization of innovation and time management by middle leaders suggests areas where they might benefit from additional development. For teachers, the overwhelming reliance on communication and the lesser use of other strategies suggest that while they are adept at leveraging communication, there might be room for developing a broader set of skills to address challenges more effectively.

In summary, both groups highlight the importance of communication and support in overcoming challenges, but there is a noticeable difference in the utilization of other strategies, indicating potential areas for professional development to enhance their effectiveness in their respective roles. The findings from Fairman & Mackenzie (2012) suggest that teacher leaders exhibit strong interpersonal communication skills, a willingness to question existing practices, and an ability to resolve conflicts. These attributes align with the results of the current study, which indicate that Middle Leaders predominantly rely on communication and listening skills, as well as support from their team, to navigate challenges. The significant use of these strategies underscores the importance of effective interpersonal skills and a collaborative work environment.

Table 20

The degree to which middle leaders and teachers need training

Need for training in	Chi Square p-value- Middle Leaders	Chi Square p-value- Teachers
Time Management	0.000	0.000
Self-Management	0.000	0.000
Communication Skills	0.000	0.000
Dealing with discipline	0.000	0.000
Pastoral care of students	0.000	0.000
Dealing with parents	0.000	0.000
Managing conflicts	0.000	0.000
Working with senior management	0.000	0.000
Working with other middle leaders	0.000	0.000
Working with teachers	0.000	0.000

Need of training in time management

Among the middle leaders who reported engaging in professional development courses for the Middle Leader position, 55.7% stated that they did not require much time management ("Not Required"), 17.1% reported needing a little time management, and 2.9% felt neutral about their time management skills. Interestingly, none of the respondents who engaged in

professional development courses considered essential time management skills for their Middle Leader role.

The Pearson Chi-Square statistic is 67.382 with 3 degrees of freedom, indicating a significant association between engagement in professional development courses and perceived time management skills ($p < .001$). The results suggest a strong and significant association between engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and perceived time management skills. Specifically, those who engaged in such courses were more likely to report higher levels of time management skills compared to those who did not engage in such courses.

From Teachers' perspective the Chi-Square test for "Time Management" indicates a highly significant result (Chi-Square = 108.714, df = 4, $p < .001$), demonstrating a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies in the responses. The majority of respondents indicated that training in time management is "Essential," with an observed count of 48, which is significantly higher than the expected count of 14, resulting in a positive residual of 34. This indicates a strong need for time management training among the participants.

The comparison between leaders and teachers shows a clear difference in how teachers and middle leaders view the importance of time management skills. Teachers see them as crucial, likely because they lack training in this area. On the other hand, middle leaders who have undergone professional development courses don't consider time management as essential. This suggests that training may have provided them with alternative strategies or perspectives. The significant link between professional development and perceived time management skills among middle leaders highlights the impact of training on skill perception.

Need of training in self-management skills

The results shed light on the relationship between respondents' engagement in professional development courses and their perceived self-management skills. Specifically, it indicates how the distribution of respondents' self-management skills varies depending on whether they participated in professional development courses or not.

In this context, among those who did engage in professional development courses, the majority (67.3%) expressed that they did not feel the need for significant improvement in their self-management skills. This suggests that participation in professional development initiatives may contribute to a sense of confidence or proficiency in managing oneself effectively in leadership roles. It implies that those who actively seek out opportunities for skill enhancement tend to perceive themselves as already proficient in self-management, potentially reflecting a proactive and self-aware approach to professional growth.

The Chi-Square test conducted on the relationship between engagement in professional development courses and self-management levels among middle leaders yielded a highly significant result ($\chi^2 = 70.000$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates a strong association between these variables, suggesting that middle leaders' engagement in professional development courses is not independent of their self-management levels. The likelihood ratio and linear-by-linear association tests further support this finding, reinforcing the conclusion that there exists a notable relationship between professional development participation and self-management proficiency among middle leaders.

This result implies that there is a substantial relationship between middle leaders' participation in professional development courses and their self-management levels.

Specifically, it suggests that middle leaders who engage in professional development courses may demonstrate different levels of self-management compared to those who do not participate in such courses.

From teachers' perspective the survey results highlight significant differences in teachers' need for training in self-management. Only 5.7% of teachers felt that self-management training was not required. On the other hand, 70% of teachers expressed that self-management training is required, far exceeding the expected 20%, highlighting a strong demand for such training. The Chi-Square test result of 112.000 with a significance level of .000 confirms that these differences are statistically significant, indicating a substantial perceived need for self-management training among teachers.

This analysis implies that middle leaders, who have participated in professional development courses, generally display stronger self-management skills. The significant statistical association between their professional development engagement and self-management proficiency indicates that such training has likely contributed to their improved self-management capabilities. On the other hand, a substantial proportion of teachers—70%—expressed a need for self-management training, highlighting a pronounced gap in this skill area among teachers compared to middle leaders.

This disparity suggests that while middle leaders have benefited from targeted professional development that enhances their self-management skills, teachers have not had the same opportunities or resources. As a result, many teachers feel underprepared in this critical area. To address this gap, it would be beneficial to offer teachers similar professional development opportunities that focus on self-management. Such training could help teachers manage their time, set priorities, and handle stress more effectively, ultimately leading to

improved performance and job satisfaction. This targeted approach to professional development could bridge the gap in self-management skills between teachers and middle leaders, fostering a more cohesive and well-prepared educational team.

Need of training in communication skills

This part of the crosstab provides insights into how respondents' communication skills relate to their participation in professional development courses for middle leadership preparation. 63.5% of them reported that they did not consider significant improvement in communication skills necessary. 28.8% felt they required a little improvement. 5.8% indicated a neutral stance. Only 1.9% expressed the need for essential improvement in communication skills.

On the other hand, among those who did not participate in professional development courses, a single respondent (5.6%) perceived the need for required improvement in communication skills, while the majority (94.4%) felt they were essential.

Overall, this breakdown suggests that a significant portion of respondents who engaged in professional development courses for middle leadership felt adequately equipped in communication skills. In contrast, among those who did not engage in such courses, the majority recognized the importance of essential improvement in communication skills, highlighting a potential gap that could be addressed through targeted professional development initiatives.

The chi-square test results indicate a significant relationship between engagement in professional development courses for middle leader preparation and communication skills. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 67.382 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000

suggests that there is a strong association between these variables. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio and Linear-by-Linear Association tests also show significant results, reinforcing the notion of a meaningful relationship.

This implies that middle leaders who participated in professional development courses to prepare for their roles tend to exhibit different levels of communication skills compared to those who did not engage in such courses. It suggests that professional development may have an impact on enhancing communication abilities among middle leaders within educational contexts.

The analysis of teachers' perceived need for training in communication skills reveals significant findings. The Chi-Square test result of 37.829 with 2 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 indicates a strong association between teachers' perceived need for communication skills training and the actual distribution of responses across different categories. Specifically, the observed frequencies deviate significantly from the expected frequencies, suggesting that there are notable discrepancies in how teachers perceive their need for communication skills training.

Of the teachers surveyed, 62.9% indicated that communication skills training is essential, while only 34.3% of respondents reported that such training is required. This disparity indicates that a large majority of teachers recognize the critical importance of communication skills in their profession. Interestingly, a small proportion (2.9%) stated that communication skills training is not required, suggesting a potential misunderstanding or underestimation of the significance of effective communication in the educational context.

Overall, these results underscore the importance of communication skills in the teaching profession and highlight the widespread recognition among teachers of the need for training in this area. Effective communication is essential for fostering positive relationships with students, colleagues, and parents, as well as for facilitating successful teaching and learning experiences. Therefore, investing in communication skills training for teachers could lead to improved instructional practices, stronger interpersonal connections, and ultimately enhanced student outcomes.

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding their engagement in professional development courses and perceived need for training in communication skills reveals noteworthy findings. Middle leaders who underwent professional development courses showed varied levels of communication skills, suggesting that such courses may enhance their abilities in this area. In contrast, teachers overwhelmingly recognize the importance of communication skills, with a majority indicating that training in this area is either essential or required. The discrepancy between middle leaders' and teachers' perspectives highlights the potential impact of targeted professional development on communication skills enhancement, particularly among middle leaders. These findings emphasize the critical role of effective communication in educational contexts and underscore the importance of investing in communication skills training for both middle leaders and teachers to improve instructional practices and foster positive learning environments.

Need of training in dealing with discipline

The findings reveal a notable distinction between middle leaders who participated in professional development courses and those who did not, particularly regarding their perceptions of dealing with discipline. Among those who engaged in professional

development, a significant proportion (51.9%) expressed that they did not require significant improvement in dealing with discipline. This suggests a level of confidence or proficiency in managing disciplinary matters among these middle leaders. Furthermore, 25.0% of participants indicated a need for only a slight improvement in this area, indicating a moderate level of confidence but with room for enhancement. Additionally, a smaller percentage (7.7%) perceived the need for essential improvement in dealing with discipline, indicating a recognition of areas where they may require further development.

In contrast, among middle leaders who did not partake in professional development courses, a striking 94.4% acknowledged the importance of essential improvement in dealing with discipline. This stark contrast suggests that those who did not engage in professional development courses may have a heightened awareness of their need for improvement in this aspect of their role. This finding underscores the potential benefits of professional development opportunities in enhancing middle leaders' confidence and competence in managing discipline effectively within their respective contexts.

Overall, these findings highlight the potential impact of professional development on middle leaders' perceptions of their abilities in dealing with discipline. They suggest that participation in such courses may contribute to a greater sense of confidence and proficiency among middle leaders in managing disciplinary matters, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness in this aspect of their role.

The chi-square test results indicate a significant relationship between engagement in professional development courses for middle leader preparation and dealing with discipline. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 48.000 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 suggests a strong association between these variables. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio and

Linear-by-Linear Association tests also show significant results, reinforcing the notion of a meaningful relationship.

This implies that middle leaders who participated in professional development courses to prepare for their roles exhibit different approaches to dealing with discipline compared to those who did not engage in such courses. It suggests that professional development may have an impact on how middle leaders handle disciplinary matters within educational settings. Further analysis may be needed to understand the nature and extent of this relationship.

The analysis of teachers' need for training in dealing with discipline reveals significant variations in their responses. The Chi-Square test result of 26.686 with 3 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 indicates a strong association between teachers' perceived need for discipline training and the actual distribution of responses across different categories. The observed frequencies differ notably from the expected frequencies, highlighting significant discrepancies in teachers' perceptions of their training needs.

The survey results show that 35.7% of teachers (25 out of 70) indicated that training in dealing with discipline is not required, which is higher than the expected frequency of 17.5. Additionally, 44.3% of teachers (31 out of 70) reported that they need a little training in this area, again exceeding the expected frequency. Conversely, only 7.1% of teachers (5 out of 70) were neutral about their need for discipline training, and 12.9% (9 out of 70) felt that such training is required, both of which are lower than the expected frequencies. These results suggest a mixed perception among teachers regarding the necessity of training in dealing with discipline.

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding the need for training in dealing with discipline reveals intriguing insights. The significant relationship found between middle leaders' engagement in professional development courses and their approach to handling discipline underscores the potential influence of such training on leadership practices within educational settings. Conversely, teachers' responses indicate a more diverse spectrum of perceptions regarding the necessity of discipline training. While a substantial portion of teachers expressed a need for some level of training in this area, a considerable proportion also deemed it unnecessary. This discrepancy suggests differing perspectives among teachers regarding the importance of formal training in disciplinary matters, highlighting the complexity of addressing disciplinary challenges within schools. Further exploration into the underlying factors driving these perceptions could inform targeted professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing disciplinary practices across educational contexts.

Need of training in pastoral care of students

The crosstabulation regarding pastoral care of students reveals interesting insights into the relationship between middle leaders' engagement in professional development courses and their perceived competency in providing pastoral care.

Among middle leaders who participated in professional development courses, the majority (53.8%) indicated that they did not require significant improvement in providing pastoral care for students, while 42.3% felt they needed only a little improvement. These findings suggest that those who engaged in professional development courses generally felt confident in their abilities to address pastoral care needs, with only a small percentage (1.9%) expressing neutral views and even fewer (1.9%) indicating an essential need for improvement.

Conversely, among middle leaders who did not engage in professional development courses, a significant majority (83.3%) expressed an essential need for improvement in providing pastoral care. This finding highlights a notable disparity compared to their counterparts who participated in professional development courses, indicating a potential correlation between professional development participation and perceived competency in pastoral care.

The chi-square test results indicate a significant relationship between engagement in professional development courses for middle leader preparation and pastoral care of students. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 55.030 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 suggests a strong association between these variables. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio and Linear-by-Linear Association tests also show significant results, reinforcing the notion of a meaningful relationship.

This implies that middle leaders who participated in professional development courses to prepare for their roles exhibit different levels of involvement or emphasis on pastoral care of students compared to those who did not engage in such courses. It suggests that professional development may have an impact on how middle leaders prioritize and approach pastoral care responsibilities within educational settings. Further exploration may be necessary to understand the specifics of this relationship and its implications for student well-being and academic success.

For teachers the observed data suggests a significant need for training among teachers in pastoral care for students. Specifically, 82.9% of teachers indicated that they do not require training in this area, while only 17.1% expressed a need for a little training. This indicates a notable discrepancy between the perceived need for training and the actual distribution of

responses, highlighting a potential gap in teachers' preparedness to provide pastoral care to students. The Chi-Square test statistic for this variable is 30.229 with 1 degree of freedom, indicating a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in pastoral care and the observed responses ($p < .001$).

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding their perceived need for training in pastoral care for students reveals intriguing insights into the potential impact of professional development courses. For middle leaders, engagement in professional development seems to be closely linked to their approaches to pastoral care. The significant relationship between participation in professional development and pastoral care of students, as evidenced by the Chi-Square Tests, suggests that these courses may equip middle leaders with the skills and perspectives necessary to address the diverse pastoral care needs within educational settings. This highlights the potential role of professional development in shaping how middle leaders prioritize and approach their pastoral care responsibilities, which could have implications for student well-being and academic success.

On the other hand, teachers express a significant need for training in pastoral care for students, with a notable majority indicating that they require either no training or only a little. This suggests a gap between the perceived need for training and the actual preparedness of teachers to provide pastoral care. The observed data underscores the importance of addressing this gap through targeted training programs that enhance teachers' abilities to support the holistic development and well-being of their students. The significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in pastoral care and their responses further emphasizes the importance of prioritizing this area in professional development initiatives. Further exploration could delve into the specific strategies and approaches that can effectively support

teachers in fulfilling their pastoral care responsibilities and promoting a nurturing school environment conducive to student success.

Need of training in dealing with parents

The crosstabulation concerning dealing with parents provides valuable insights into the relationship between middle leaders' engagement in professional development courses and their perceived ability to handle interactions with parents.

Among middle leaders who participated in professional development courses, the majority (69.2%) expressed that they did not require significant improvement in dealing with parents, while 28.8% indicated they needed only a little improvement. A small percentage (1.9%) viewed dealing with parents as an essential area for improvement. This suggests that those who engaged in professional development courses generally felt confident in their abilities to interact effectively with parents, with only a minority perceiving a substantial need for improvement.

Conversely, among middle leaders who did not engage in professional development courses, a significant majority (94.4%) indicated an essential need for improvement in dealing with parents. This stark contrast compared to their counterparts who participated in professional development courses suggests a potential correlation between professional development participation and perceived competency in handling parent interactions.

The chi-square test results indicate a significant relationship between engagement in professional development courses for middle leader preparation and dealing with parents. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 60.148 with 2 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 suggests a strong association between these variables. Similarly, both the Likelihood Ratio and Linear-

by-Linear Association tests also show significant results, further supporting the notion of a meaningful relationship.

This implies that middle leaders who participated in professional development courses to prepare for their roles may have different approaches or levels of involvement in dealing with parents compared to those who did not engage in such courses. The significance of this relationship suggests that professional development may play a crucial role in shaping how middle leaders interact with parents, potentially impacting parent-school relationships and overall school-community dynamics. Further investigation could explore the specific aspects of professional development that influence these interactions and their broader implications for educational outcomes and stakeholder engagement.

For teachers the data reveals a strong demand for training among teachers in dealing with parents. A significant proportion of teachers (71.4%) expressed that dealing with parents is either required (71.4%) or considered essential (20%). This indicates a widespread recognition among teachers of the importance of effective communication and engagement with parents, suggesting a need for tailored training programs in this area. The Chi-Square test statistic for this variable is 85.543 with 3 degrees of freedom, indicating a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in dealing with parents and the observed responses ($p < .001$).

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding their perceived need for training in dealing with parents sheds light on the potential impact of professional development courses in this area. For middle leaders, engagement in professional development appears to be linked to their proficiency in interacting with parents. The significant relationship between participation in professional development and dealing with parents, as

indicated by the Chi-Square Tests, suggests that these courses may equip middle leaders with strategies and approaches to facilitate more positive and effective parent-school interactions. This underscores the potential role of professional development in shaping school-community dynamics and fostering collaboration between schools and parents.

Conversely, teachers demonstrate a strong demand for training in dealing with parents, with a majority indicating that such training is either required or essential. This underscores the widespread recognition among teachers of the importance of effective communication and engagement with parents in supporting student success. The observed data highlights a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in dealing with parents and their responses, emphasizing the need for tailored training programs in this area. Further exploration could delve into the specific aspects of professional development that influence these interactions and their broader implications for educational outcomes and stakeholder engagement.

Need of training in managing conflicts

The crosstabulation concerning managing conflicts sheds light on how middle leaders' participation in professional development courses relates to their perceived ability to manage conflicts effectively. Among middle leaders who engaged in professional development courses, the majority (55.8%) indicated that they did not require significant improvement in managing conflicts, while 19.2% felt they needed only a little improvement. A smaller proportion (11.5%) considered managing conflicts as a required area for improvement, and 13.5% viewed it as essential. This suggests that those who participated in professional development courses generally felt relatively confident in their ability to manage conflicts, with a notable portion recognizing the importance of further improvement in this aspect.

Conversely, among middle leaders who did not engage in professional development courses, a significant majority (88.9%) perceived managing conflicts as an essential area for improvement. This stark contrast compared to their counterparts who participated in professional development courses suggests a potential correlation between professional development participation and perceived competency in conflict management.

The chi-square test results indicate a significant relationship between engagement in professional development courses for middle leader preparation and managing conflicts. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 34.960 with 3 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 suggests a strong association between these variables. Similarly, both the Likelihood Ratio and Linear-by-Linear Association tests also show significant results, further supporting the notion of a meaningful relationship.

This implies that middle leaders who participated in professional development courses to prepare for their roles may have different levels of competence or approaches in managing conflicts compared to those who did not engage in such courses. The significance of this relationship suggests that professional development may play a crucial role in equipping middle leaders with the skills and strategies necessary to navigate conflicts effectively within educational settings. Further exploration could investigate the specific content and methods of professional development that contribute to enhanced conflict management abilities among middle leaders and their impact on school climate and organizational effectiveness.

Teachers' responses indicate a substantial need for training in managing conflicts, with 82.9% expressing that such training is either required (72.9%) or considered essential (10%). This suggests that teachers recognize the importance of conflict resolution skills in maintaining a positive learning environment and fostering healthy relationships within the

school community. The Chi-Square test statistic for this variable is 126.143 with 4 degrees of freedom, indicating a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in conflict management and the observed responses ($p < .001$).

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding the perceived need for training in managing conflicts reveals interesting insights. For middle leaders, engagement in professional development courses appears to be associated with their proficiency in conflict management. The statistically significant relationship between participation in professional development and conflict management skills, as indicated by the Chi-Square Tests, suggests that these courses may equip middle leaders with the necessary strategies and techniques to navigate conflicts effectively within the school environment. This highlights the potential role of professional development in fostering a more harmonious and productive school climate.

Conversely, teachers express a significant need for training in managing conflicts, with the majority indicating that such training is either required or essential. This underscores the recognition among teachers of the importance of conflict resolution skills in maintaining a positive learning environment and fostering healthy relationships within the school community. The observed data highlights a strong association between teachers' perceived need for training in conflict management and their responses, emphasizing the importance of addressing this area through targeted professional development initiatives. Further exploration could delve into the specific content and methods of professional development that contribute to enhanced conflict management abilities among both middle leaders and teachers, ultimately impacting school climate and organizational effectiveness.

Need of training in working with senior management

The crosstabulation regarding working with senior management explores how middle leaders' engagement in professional development courses relates to their perceived ability to collaborate effectively with senior management.

Among middle leaders who participated in professional development courses, the majority (53.8%) indicated that they did not require significant improvement in working with senior management. A smaller proportion felt they needed a little improvement (9.6%), while even fewer considered it a neutral area for improvement (5.8%). Notably, 19.2% perceived it as a required area for improvement, and 11.5% deemed it essential. This suggests that while many middle leaders who participated in professional development courses felt relatively confident in their ability to work with senior management, there is still recognition of the importance of further improvement in this aspect.

Conversely, among middle leaders who did not engage in professional development courses, the vast majority (88.9%) perceived working with senior management as an essential area for improvement. This significant difference compared to their counterparts who participated in professional development courses suggests a potential correlation between professional development participation and perceived competency in working with senior management.

The Chi-Square Tests indicate a statistically significant association between these variables, with all test statistics (Pearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio, and Linear-by-Linear Association) yielding p-values of .000. This suggests that there is a strong relationship

between engagement in professional development courses and the extent of interaction with senior management.

For teachers the observed data shows a significant need for training among teachers in working with senior management. A large majority of teachers (77.1%) indicated that such training is either required (34.3%) or considered essential (42.9%). This underscores the importance of effective collaboration and communication between teachers and senior management for the successful implementation of educational initiatives. The Chi-Square test statistic for this variable is 51.257 with 3 degrees of freedom, indicating a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in working with senior management and the observed responses ($p < .001$).

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding the perceived need for training in working with senior management reveals notable insights. Both groups demonstrate a strong association between engagement in professional development courses and collaboration with senior management, suggesting the potential impact of such courses on enhancing leadership skills and fostering productive relationships within the school hierarchy. For middle leaders, professional development initiatives offer opportunities to develop communication strategies and leadership approaches tailored to senior management dynamics, facilitating more effective interaction and collaboration. This is supported by the statistically significant association between professional development participation and engagement with senior management, as indicated by the Chi-Square Tests. Conversely, teachers express a significant need for training in working with senior management, emphasizing the importance of effective collaboration and communication channels between teachers and senior leadership in driving educational initiatives. The observed data underscores the critical role of effective

collaboration between teachers and senior management for successful educational outcomes, highlighting the potential benefits of targeted professional development initiatives in this area.

Need of training in working with other middle leaders

The crosstabulation regarding working with other middle leaders examines the relationship between middle leaders' engagement in professional development courses and their perceived ability to collaborate with their peers in similar leadership roles.

Among middle leaders who participated in professional development courses, the majority (67.3%) indicated that they did not require significant improvement in working with other middle leaders. A smaller proportion felt they needed a little improvement (23.1%), while very few considered it a neutral area for improvement (1.9%). Notably, a small percentage perceived it as a required area for improvement (5.8%), and another small percentage deemed it essential (1.9%). This suggests that while many middle leaders who participated in professional development courses felt relatively confident in their ability to work with their peers, there is still recognition of the importance of further improvement in this aspect.

Conversely, among middle leaders who did not engage in professional development courses, the vast majority (94.4%) perceived working with other middle leaders as an essential area for improvement. This significant difference compared to their counterparts who participated in professional development courses suggests a potential correlation between professional development participation and perceived competency in working with other middle leaders.

The Chi-Square Tests indicate a significant association between these variables, with all test statistics (Pearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio, and Linear-by-Linear Association) producing p-values of .000. This suggests a strong relationship between participating in professional development courses and the extent of interaction with other middle leaders.

Teachers expressed a considerable need for training in working with other middle leaders, with 72.9% indicating that such training is either required (38.6%) or considered essential (34.3%). This suggests that teachers recognize the value of effective teamwork and collaboration among middle leaders in driving school improvement initiatives and enhancing overall teaching and learning outcomes. The Chi-Square test statistic for this variable is 33.657 with 3 degrees of freedom, indicating a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in working with other middle leaders and the observed responses ($p < .001$).

The comparison between middle leaders and teachers regarding the perceived need for training in working with other middle leaders reveals insightful findings. While both groups demonstrate a strong association between professional development participation and collaboration with peers in similar leadership roles, their perspectives and needs differ. Middle leaders, who are more likely to engage in professional development courses, may benefit from these opportunities to enhance their skills in teamwork, communication, and leadership, thereby contributing to a more cohesive leadership team within the school. Conversely, teachers express a significant need for training in working with other middle leaders, underscoring the importance of effective collaboration among leadership personnel in driving school improvement efforts. These results suggest a mutual recognition of the importance of teamwork and collaboration among middle leaders and teachers, highlighting the potential

impact of professional development initiatives on fostering a supportive and conducive school environment.

Need of training in working with teachers

The crosstabulation regarding working with teachers explores the relationship between middle leaders' participation in professional development courses and their perceived proficiency in collaborating with teaching staff.

Among middle leaders who engaged in professional development courses, the data shows varying degrees of perceived necessity for improvement in working with teachers. Nearly half of them (46.2%) considered that they did not require significant improvement in this aspect, indicating a relatively high level of confidence in their ability to collaborate with teachers. A smaller proportion felt they needed a little improvement (13.5%), while a considerable portion perceived it as a required area for improvement (28.8%). Additionally, a smaller group deemed it essential (11.5%), suggesting a recognition of the critical importance of effective collaboration with teachers for middle leadership roles.

Conversely, among middle leaders who did not participate in professional development courses, the majority (83.3%) perceived working with teachers as a required area for improvement, while a smaller proportion (11.1%) believed it was not required. This stark contrast suggests a potential correlation between professional development participation and perceived competency in collaborating with teaching staff.

The Chi-Square Tests indicate a significant association between these variables, with all test statistics (Pearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio, and Linear-by-Linear Association)

producing p-values of .000. This suggests a strong relationship between engagement in professional development courses and the extent of interaction with teachers.

Teachers highlighted a significant need for training in working with their peers, with 75.7% indicating that such training is either required (48.6%) or considered essential (27.1%). This emphasizes the importance of fostering a supportive and collaborative working environment among teachers to promote professional growth and enhance student learning experiences. The Chi-Square test statistic for this variable is 60.143 with 4 degrees of freedom, indicating a significant association between teachers' perceived need for training in working with teachers and the observed responses ($p < .001$).

Overall, while teachers emphasize the importance of training in working with their peers, the findings imply that professional development opportunities for middle leaders could play a crucial role in fostering effective collaboration within the school community, ultimately contributing to improved teaching practices and student outcomes.

- **Discussion**

Stephenson (2010) highlighted various skills and competencies essential for Heads of Departments (HoDs), such as subject knowledge, assessment expertise, pedagogical understanding, shared vision, strategic planning, team development, managing people, effective communication, time management, and delegation skills. The alignment with the present study's results is evident in the areas where both Middle Leaders and Teachers expressed a significant need for training.

In the study, both Middle Leaders and Teachers identified a pressing need for training in various areas, including time management, self-management, communication skills, dealing

with discipline, pastoral care of students, handling interactions with parents, managing conflicts, collaborating with senior management, and working effectively with other middle leaders and teachers. This correspondence suggests that the skills and competencies outlined by Stephenson (2010) are indeed crucial for educational leaders and educators, as evidenced by the identified training needs in the current study.

4.4. Type of professional development preferred by middle leaders

4.4.1. Training Model

The analysis indicates a strong connection between respondents' engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and their inclination toward training models delivered by experts. The statistical tests show a significant association between these variables, suggesting that respondents' preferences for expert-led training differ based on their participation in professional development.

Among those who took part in professional development courses, the majority (around 71.5%) expressed a preference for training led by experts, with varying degrees of preference: somewhat (55.8%), very (15.4%), and a little (7.7%). Similarly, among those who did not engage in formal courses, a substantial proportion (around 94.4%) still favored expert-led training, with preferences tilted more toward the "very" category (61.1%). This indicates a consistent desire for expert-led training across the board, regardless of formal course participation.

These results highlight the widespread acknowledgment of the value and effectiveness of expert-led training in preparing Middle Leaders for their roles. Whether through formal

courses or other means, the expertise and guidance provided by knowledgeable professionals are considered essential in enhancing leadership skills and capabilities.

For teachers, the data suggests a strong preference for receiving training from an expert, with 75.7% of respondents expressing a "Very" high interest in this model. This indicates a clear inclination towards learning from knowledgeable individuals who can provide specialized insights and expertise. The Chi-Square test, with a value of 138.143 and a significance level of .000, confirms a significant association between the preference for this training model and the observed responses.

4.4.2. Award bearing

This analysis examines the relationship between respondents' engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and their involvement in award-bearing models or achieving postgraduate qualifications. The results indicate a significant association between these variables, as demonstrated by the Chi-Square test statistics.

Among those who participated in professional development courses, a majority (around 83%) reported some level of engagement in award-bearing models or achieving postgraduate qualifications. This suggests that individuals who proactively seek professional development opportunities for Middle Leader roles are more likely to pursue further academic or qualification-based advancements.

Conversely, among those who did not engage in professional development courses, the proportion involved in award-bearing models or postgraduate qualifications is notably lower, with only a minority (around 25%) indicating such involvement. This implies that without

formal professional development initiatives, individuals are less inclined to pursue additional qualifications or academic achievements related to leadership roles.

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of professional development courses in stimulating individuals' interest and commitment to further educational pursuits, potentially leading to enhanced skills and qualifications relevant to Middle Leader positions.

For teachers, in contrast to the training model, the award-bearing model or achieving post-graduate qualifications appears to garner less interest among respondents, with only 8.6% expressing a "Very" high interest. The Chi-Square test, with a value of 31.286 and a significance level of .000, indicates a significant association between the preference for this model and the observed responses. This suggests a relatively lower priority placed on formal qualifications compared to other training models.

4.4.3. Deficit model

The crosstab analysis explores the relationship between engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and involvement in deficit model training, which involves identifying performance deficits and receiving training to address them.

The results suggest a moderate association between these variables, supported by the Chi-Square test statistics, although the linear-by-linear association is not statistically significant.

Among respondents who participated in professional development courses, the majority (around 65%) reported some level of involvement in deficit model training. This indicates that individuals who actively seek professional development opportunities for

Middle Leader roles are more likely to engage in deficit model training to address performance gaps.

Conversely, among those who did not engage in professional development courses, the proportion involved in deficit model training is lower, with only about 28% indicating such involvement. This suggests that without formal professional development initiatives, individuals are less likely to participate in deficit model training to address performance deficiencies.

Overall, while the association between engagement in professional development courses and deficit model training is evident, it is not overwhelmingly strong. However, the findings suggest that professional development initiatives may play a role in facilitating participation in deficit model training, potentially contributing to the improvement of leadership skills and performance among Middle Leaders.

From teachers' perspective, the deficit model, focusing on identifying performance deficits and receiving training to address them, seems to elicit varied responses. While 42.9% of respondents expressed a "Very" high interest, 37.1% indicated a lower interest level, with "Neutral," "A Little," or "Not at all" responses. The Chi-Square test, with a value of 44.429 and a significance level of .000, confirms a significant association between the preference for this model and the observed responses.

4.4.4. Cascade model

The crosstab analysis examines the relationship between engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and the cascade model, where one colleague receives training and then passes it on to others.

The results suggest that there is no significant association between these variables, as indicated by the Chi-Square test statistics. Both the Pearson Chi-Square and the Likelihood Ratio tests yield p-values greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, implying that any observed differences could be due to random chance rather than a meaningful relationship.

Looking at the distribution of responses, among those who engaged in professional development courses, the distribution across levels of involvement in the cascade model varies. However, there is no clear pattern indicating a strong relationship between participation in professional development courses and involvement in the cascade model.

Similarly, among those who did not engage in professional development courses, the distribution across levels of involvement in the cascade model also varies without a discernible trend.

Overall, while there are variations in the distribution of responses, there is no evidence to suggest that engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions is associated with a particular level of involvement in the cascade model. Therefore, the findings do not support a significant relationship between these variables.

For teachers, the cascade model, where training is passed from one colleague to another, shows a more balanced distribution of responses. Approximately 41.4% of respondents expressed a "Somewhat" high interest, while 41.4% showed a "Very" high interest. The Chi-Square test, with a value of 53.714 and a significance level of .000, indicates a significant association between the preference for this model and the observed responses.

4.4.5. Mentoring model

The crosstab analysis examines the relationship between engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and participation in the mentoring model, where individuals have a mentor to offer guidance and advice for problem-solving.

The results indicate a statistically significant association between these variables, as evidenced by the Chi-Square test statistics. Both the Pearson Chi-Square and the Likelihood Ratio tests yield p-values less than 0.05, indicating that the association observed is unlikely to be due to random chance.

Specifically, the data show that a higher proportion of individuals who engaged in professional development courses also participated in the mentoring model, compared to those who did not engage in such courses. This suggests that there may be a connection between professional development engagement and seeking mentorship for guidance and problem-solving.

Moreover, Teachers showed a strong preference for the mentoring model, with 50% expressing a "Very" high interest. This suggests a recognition of the value of personalized guidance and support in professional development. The Chi-Square test, with a value of 55.486 and a significance level of .000, confirms a significant association between the preference for this model and the observed responses.

4.4.6. Community of practice model

The crosstab analysis explores the relationship between engagement in professional development courses for Middle Leader positions and participation in the community of practice model, where groups of teachers collaborate to enhance their practice.

The results indicate a potential association between these variables, as suggested by the Chi-Square test statistics. While the Pearson Chi-Square and Likelihood Ratio tests yield p-values slightly above the conventional significance level of 0.05, the Linear-by-Linear Association test produces a p-value of 0.016, which is statistically significant.

Examining the distribution of responses, among those who engaged in professional development courses, a higher proportion reported involvement in the community of practice model. Conversely, among those who did not engage in professional development courses, fewer reported participation in the community of practice model.

Specifically, the data show that individuals who participated in professional development courses were more likely to be involved in the community of practice model compared to those who did not engage in such courses. This suggests a potential relationship between formal training for Middle Leader positions and participation in collaborative teacher groups aimed at improving practice.

Although the overall association is somewhat suggestive but not definitively significant according to all tests, the statistically significant result from the Linear-by-Linear Association test indicates a potential linear trend in the data, supporting the notion that as engagement in professional development courses increases, so does participation in the community of practice model.

In conclusion, while the relationship between engagement in professional development courses and participation in the community of practice model is not unequivocally established, the findings suggest a possible association that warrants further investigation.

Finally, from teachers, the community of practice model, involving collaborative group efforts to enhance practice, received mixed responses. While 40% expressed a "Very" high interest, 51.4% showed a "Somewhat" high interest. The Chi-Square test, with a value of 79.571 and a significance level of .000, indicates a significant association between the preference for this model and the observed responses.

Overall, the data highlights diverse preferences for professional development models, with varying degrees of interest across different approaches. These findings underscore the importance of offering a range of training options to accommodate individual preferences and maximize the effectiveness of professional development initiatives.

Table 21

What professional development location do you prefer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	In school	49	70.0	70.0	70.0
	Outside	15	21.4	21.4	91.4
	Online	6	8.6	8.6	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

The Chi-Square test result is statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating a significant difference between the observed and expected preferences for professional development location.

- In School: The observed frequency of 49 respondents preferring in-school professional development significantly exceeds the expected frequency of 23.3, with a positive

residual of 25.7. This suggests that a large proportion of respondents prefer professional development opportunities within their school environment.

- Outside: The observed frequency of 15 respondents preferring professional development outside of their school is significantly lower than expected, with a negative residual of -8.3. This indicates that fewer respondents than expected opt for external professional development opportunities.
- Online: Similarly, the observed frequency of 6 respondents preferring online professional development is significantly lower than expected, with a negative residual of -17.3. This implies that online platforms are less favored as a mode of professional development compared to in-school options.

These findings suggest a strong preference among respondents for in-school professional development opportunities. This preference may stem from factors such as convenience, familiarity with the environment, and perceived relevance to their current roles and contexts.

The lower preference for external and online professional development highlights potential areas for improvement in terms of promoting and enhancing the effectiveness of these alternative modes of learning. Educators and educational institutions may need to explore strategies for making external and online professional development more appealing and accessible to their staff, potentially by addressing barriers such as time constraints, resource availability, and the perceived quality of online learning experiences. Additionally, understanding the specific needs and preferences of educators when designing professional development programs can help ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Professional development opportunities are available to middle leaders in Arabic subjects

This research investigates the range of professional development opportunities specifically designed for middle leaders in Arabic subjects within private schools in Dubai. By identifying and categorizing these opportunities, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the options available to these leaders for enhancing their leadership skills and pedagogical practices.

The data reveals that a substantial majority of middle leaders have participated in professional development courses aimed at preparing them for their roles. Middle leaders in Arabic subjects reported engaging in a variety of professional development activities post their appointment. The most prevalent type of professional development reported by participants is training courses on teaching pedagogy, indicating a strong focus on improving instructional methods. This is followed closely by training courses on leadership, highlighting the importance of leadership skills in their roles. Other notable professional development opportunities include leadership management programs, Cambridge educational leadership courses, specialized courses offered by the Sharjah Private Education Authority, coaching and mentoring, and self-assessment and continuous improvement strategies.

Middle leaders also pursued additional qualifications to enhance their professional capabilities. A substantial number pursued professional diplomas in methods of teaching academic subjects in Arabic, additional bachelor's and master's degrees, various professional certificates, additional training courses, and teaching licenses.

The data also highlights the extensive teaching experience of middle leaders before their appointment. A significant majority had more than nine years of teaching experience, with the remaining having between seven to nine years of experience. At the time of their appointment as middle leaders, the majority had three to four years of experience in their roles, although a notable number had less than two years of experience. This variation in experience levels among individuals appointed as middle leaders suggests that schools may appoint middle leaders with varying levels of experience, potentially bringing a mix of fresh perspectives and seasoned expertise to their leadership roles.

5.2. Impact of these opportunities from the perspectives of both leaders and teachers

The study demonstrates that professional development opportunities have a significant positive impact on both middle leaders and teachers. Middle leaders report that these courses enhance their preparedness for leadership roles, which underscores the effectiveness of targeted training in bolstering leadership capabilities. Teachers similarly find these courses beneficial for their everyday teaching practices, suggesting that professional development is crucial for improving instructional methods and overall teaching quality.

Moreover, the wide range of roles occupied by middle leaders—from Arabic leaders to academic supervisors—indicates a need for professional development programs that are customized to address the specific demands and responsibilities associated with each position. This tailored approach is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of professional development initiatives and aligning them with the diverse needs of educational leadership.

Induction programs play a vital role in helping both middle leaders and teachers integrate into their roles effectively. The high participation rates in these programs reflect their importance, yet the varying levels of perceived effectiveness suggest that there is still room to enhance these programs to ensure they fully meet the needs of new leaders and educators.

Challenges such as heavy workloads, lack of role clarity, and power overlaps are significant issues that middle leaders face. These challenges highlight the necessity for clear job descriptions and structured role definitions to mitigate confusion and conflicts. Addressing these challenges through organizational support and improved communication can enhance the efficiency and satisfaction of middle leaders.

Both middle leaders and teachers rely heavily on communication and support to overcome their challenges. Effective communication and strong team support are crucial strategies that underline the importance of interpersonal skills and collaborative efforts in educational settings.

Moreover, the study highlights significant training needs identified by both middle leaders and teachers. Middle leaders, having undergone professional development, exhibit stronger self-management skills, suggesting the efficacy of targeted training. However, teachers express pronounced needs for training in various areas, including time management, communication, conflict resolution, collaboration with senior management, and working effectively with other leaders. Addressing these gaps through targeted professional development initiatives can foster a more cohesive and supportive educational environment, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness.

For both middle leaders and teachers, there's a clear preference for expert-led training, indicating the perceived value of expertise in professional development. Middle leaders show a higher interest in further academic pursuits and qualifications compared to teachers. While both groups express interest in the cascade model, teachers show a more balanced interest in the community of practice model. Additionally, both middle leaders and teachers prefer in-school professional development opportunities over external or online options. These findings highlight the importance of tailored professional development approaches to meet the diverse needs and preferences of educators.

5.3 Implications

- Tailored Professional Development for Middle Leaders: The findings suggest that professional development opportunities tailored specifically for middle leaders in Arabic subjects are widely available and highly utilized. Schools should continue to invest in such programs to ensure that middle leaders receive targeted training to enhance their leadership skills and pedagogical practices.
- Enhancing Instructional Methods and Leadership Skills: The prevalence of training courses on teaching pedagogy and leadership indicates a strong focus on improving instructional methods and leadership skills among middle leaders. This underscores the importance of continuous professional development in fostering effective teaching practices and leadership capabilities.
- Importance of Additional Qualifications: The pursuit of additional qualifications by middle leaders reflects a commitment to enhancing their professional capabilities. Educational institutions should support middle leaders in obtaining relevant certifications, diplomas, and degrees to further enrich their skills and expertise.

- Positive Impact on Middle Leaders and Teachers: The significant positive impact of professional development opportunities on both middle leaders and teachers highlights the value of investing in ongoing training and support. Schools should prioritize providing accessible and effective professional development programs to support the growth and development of their staff.
- Tailored Approach to Professional Development: The diverse roles occupied by middle leaders underscore the importance of tailored professional development programs. Schools should customize training initiatives to address the specific demands and responsibilities associated with each leadership position, maximizing their effectiveness and relevance.

5.4. Future scope

- Effectiveness of Induction Programs: Future research could explore the effectiveness of induction programs for middle leaders and teachers in integrating them into their roles effectively. Investigating ways to enhance these programs could improve staff preparedness and satisfaction.
- Addressing Challenges Faced by Middle Leaders: Further research is needed to address challenges such as heavy workloads, lack of role clarity, and power overlaps faced by middle leaders. Developing strategies to mitigate these challenges through organizational support and improved communication could enhance leadership efficiency and satisfaction.
- Training Needs Assessment: Conducting a comprehensive training needs assessment among middle leaders and teachers could identify specific areas for professional

development. Addressing these needs through targeted training initiatives can improve overall school effectiveness and staff satisfaction.

- Exploring Preferred Training Models: Investigating the preferred training models among middle leaders and teachers, such as expert-led training, cascade model, and community of practice, can provide insights into effective professional development approaches. Understanding these preferences can inform the design and delivery of future training programs.
- Enhancing In-School Professional Development: Exploring ways to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of in-school professional development opportunities could improve staff engagement and satisfaction. Schools should consider innovative approaches to delivering training within the school environment.
- Long-Term Impact of Professional Development: Assessing the long-term impact of professional development programs on middle leaders' leadership effectiveness and teachers' instructional practices can provide valuable insights into the lasting benefits of ongoing training and support.
- Global Comparative Studies: Comparative studies across different educational systems and cultural contexts can offer insights into best practices in professional development for middle leaders and teachers. Examining international trends and approaches can inform policy and practice in diverse educational settings.

By addressing these future research areas, educational institutions can further enhance the quality and effectiveness of professional development programs, ultimately promoting staff growth and improving student outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendices A

Questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire – Leaders*

1. How many years teaching experience have you?

5-10

10-20

20-30

30-40

197

2. How many years of experience had you when you were appointed the Middle Leader position?

5-10

10-20

20-30

30-40

3. Please list any further qualifications you achieved after initial teacher degree

4. Did you engage in any professional development courses to prepare you for the Middle Leader position?

Yes

No

5. Please list any professional development you engaged in after the Middle Leader position

6. Did this/these courses prepare you for the Middle Leader role?

Yes

No

7. What are your current roles/responsibilities as a Middle Leader post holder?

8. Did you receive any formal induction after taking up the Middle Leader position?

Yes

No

9. Please describe this induction

10. Did this induction support you in your role?

11. Did you get a Job description outlining your roles and responsibilities as Middle Leader post holder?

Yes

No

12. What/who has supported you most since taking up the Middle Leader position?

13. What were the biggest challenges that you faced in the Middle Leader position?

14. How did you overcome these challenges?

15. What tasks/aspects of the role do you feel most comfortable with?

16. Have you had regular reviews of your performance as Middle Leader post holder?

Yes

No

17. Were these reviews useful?

Yes

No

18. Please indicate the degree to which you need training in the following areas

	Not required	A little	Neutral	Required	Essential
Time management	○	○	○	○	○
Self Management	○	○	○	○	○
Communication skills	○	○	○	○	○
Presentation skills	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with Discipline	○	○	○	○	○
Pastoral Care of Students	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with Parents	○	○	○	○	○
Managing Conflict	○	○	○	○	○
Working with Senior Management	○	○	○	○	○
Working with other Middle Managers	○	○	○	○	○
Working with other colleagues	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

19. Please indicate what type of Professional Development you would be interested in

	Not at all	a little	Neutral	somewhat	Very
Training model/ information delivered by an expert	○	○	○	○	○
Award bearing model/ achieving a post graduate qualification	○	○	○	○	○
Deficit model/ identifying a deficit in performance and receiving training on that	○	○	○	○	○
Cascade model/ one colleague gets trained and passes this training on to others	○	○	○	○	○
Mentoring model/ having a mentor to offer guidance and advice to assist in problem solving	○	○	○	○	○
Community of Practice model/ groups of teachers working together to improve practice	○	○	○	○	○
Action Research model/ Collecting and analysing data to change practice	○	○	○	○	○

20. what professional development location do you prefer:

	No	Neutral	Yes
In school	○	○	○
Outside Venue	○	○	○
Online	○	○	○

Survey Questionnaire – Teachers*

1. How many years teaching experience have you?

5-10

10-20

20-30

30-40

30-40

3. Please list any further qualifications you achieved after initial

teacher degree

4. Did you engage in any professional development by your Middle Leader in your department?

Yes

No

5. Please list any professional development you engaged in after the Middle Leader

Was appointed in your department.

6. Did this/these courses prepare you for your day-to-day activities in the school?

Yes

No

7. What are your current roles/responsibilities as a teacher?

8. Did you receive any formal induction after appointing a Middle Leader

In your department?

Yes

No

9. Please describe this induction

10. Did this induction help you in understanding his/her role?

Yes

No

12. What/who has supported you most since taking your position as a teacher in your current school?

13. What were the biggest challenges that you faced in this position?

14. How did you overcome these challenges?

15. What tasks/aspects of the role do you feel most comfortable with?

16. Have you had regular reviews of your performance as a teacher from your Middle Leader in your department?

Yes

No

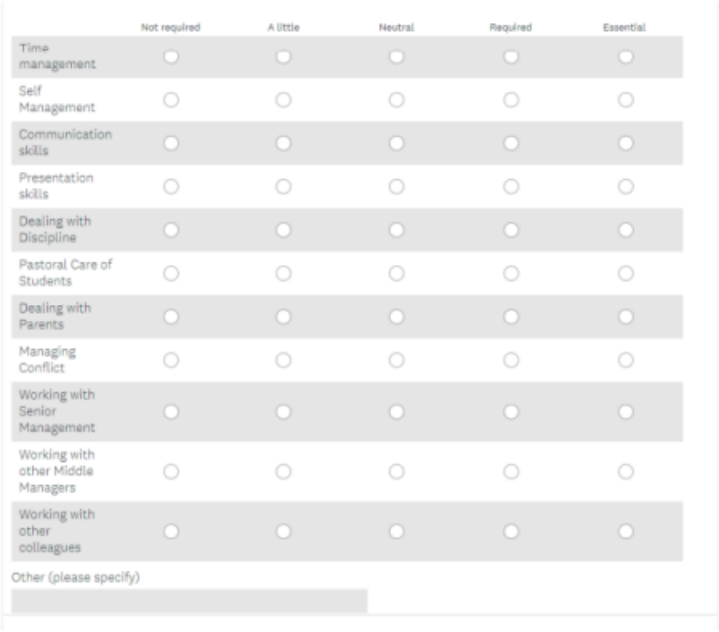
17. Were these reviews useful?

Yes

No

18. Please indicate the degree to which you need training in the

following areas



	Not required	A little	Neutral	Required	Essential
Time management	○	○	○	○	○
Self Management	○	○	○	○	○
Communication skills	○	○	○	○	○
Presentation skills	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with Discipline	○	○	○	○	○
Pastoral Care of Students	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with Parents	○	○	○	○	○
Managing Conflict	○	○	○	○	○
Working with Senior Management	○	○	○	○	○
Working with other Middle Managers	○	○	○	○	○
Working with other colleagues	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

***Sources**: Kavanagh, S., 2020. The professional development needs of appointed middle leaders in education and training board, post-primary schools. *Institute of Education*. Doctoral dissertation, Dublin City University.