

## **The Relationship between Principal's Leadership Style and Teacher Occupational Stress**

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**Abstract:** The major purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher occupational stress as perceived by teachers of Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs) in Punjab, Pakistan. The instruments of data collection were developed and validated. The data were collected through mail and analyzed using SPSS. The findings of the study confirmed the relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher occupational stress i.e. teachers were more stressed when principal's leadership style was autocratic, while under democratic leadership style, teachers had lower stress. The study also confirmed that all respondents were under some sort of occupational stress of varying intensity. The findings have implications for (i) addressing teachers' occupational stress and conditions under which the heads and teachers work; and (ii) structuring a productive *learning organization* through collegial leadership approach.

**Keywords:** leadership style, occupational stress, stressor.

### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of occupational stress is becoming increasingly globalized and affects all countries and all professions. Studies on occupational stress, in general, indicate that one of the important professions where the employees are affected work-related stress at one time or another is 'teaching'. Dunham (1976), as cited by Litt and Turk (1985), concluded that "teachers appear to perceive their jobs as more stressful than other comparable professionals". Pamela Farris (1996) of Northern Illinois University rightly referred this period as the "age of stress". She stated that "teachers, like other workers in other professions, are apt to encounter stressful situations every day". Saunders and Watkins (2000) in their study concluded that "job-related stress has diminished the satisfaction of many teachers derived from their work, caused many teachers to choose alternative careers and lessened the energy and creativity that

outstanding teachers bring to their classrooms”. Valerie Wilson (2002) of the Scottish Council for Research in Education overviewed the literature on teacher’s stress and stated that “It is now generally accepted that stress is a multidimensional and multi-level phenomenon which is influenced by personal, situational or structural factors”. Eva, Fung, and Chow (2006) conducted a study in Hong Kong kindergarten schools and found that within the general area of occupational stress “teaching has been identified as one of the most stressful occupations”. The most recent study cited by Billehaj Henrick (2007) was of European Trade Union Committee for Education, which conducted a survey on teacher’s work-related stress. Thirty eight teacher unions (primary, secondary, and vocational sectors) of twenty seven European countries participated. The study reported that “teachers are among the professions reporting the highest level of work-related stress”.

The research in the area of teacher’s occupational stress points to a variety of stressors. Litt and Turk (1985) suggested that “the role teachers perceived for themselves and the school climate, particularly the relationship with administrators, may be extremely important in predicting job stress”. Christine Harris (1999) found that one of the important features for teacher stress is, in general, administrative behavior. Moore Ferrell (1999) reviewed fifteen research articles on “Factors related to teacher stress” and identified four categories linked to teacher stress i.e. student-generated stressors, teacher personality, school organizations, and administrative factors. Paul Evans (2003) found that the “management style exhibited by the head was a probable factor in the level of stress reported by teachers”. Eva, Fung, and Chow (2006) concluded that “time management and work-related stressors are more common sources of stress whereas feelings of fatigue and emotional-related symptoms are more common manifestations of stress”. Lokanadha Reddy (2007) cited Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979) who identified four factors of teacher stress i.e. pupil’s misbehaviors, poor working conditions, time pressure, and poor schools ethics. The study by European Trade Union Committee for Education cited by Billehaj Henrick (2007) ranked sixteen stressors, the top five of which were: (i) working intensity; (ii) role overload; (iii) increased class size per teacher; (iv) unacceptable pupils’ behavior; and (v) bad school management/ lack of support from management.

In this perspective, the related literature identifies that the pivotal role is verily of the institutional head to minimize the teachers' occupational stress for creating an overall healthy school environment. Christine Harris (1999) stated that "leadership is crucial to change the status quo and bring success to schools by creating healthy and stress-free environment". It is now widely recognized that organizational effectiveness is dependent upon the leader's effective role (Avery, 2005). The studies, in general, confirm that healthy school environment provided by the democratic leadership influences the instructional effectiveness (Iqbal, 2007). Almost all these global studies signify that the educational leader of the future, therefore, must be a highly competent person who has the knowledge, insight, ability, and skills needed to bring change and create a healthy organizational culture for producing school effectiveness.

In Pakistan, literature review reveals a paucity of research on the problem. However, some studies were conducted at the Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of the Punjab, Lahore (Pakistan). For example, Akram (1998), in his doctoral study on *Causal factors in teacher stress and morale* did confirm the global finding that school teachers had diversified types of job-related stresses, but recommended that since the problem is multifaceted, further research on the problem covering different angles is warranted. Ayesha & Sadia (2006); Javed, Khursheed, & Farooq (2003); Aisha Hassan (2003); Memoona & Yasmin (2001); and Attiya, Kishwar & Najma (2001) conducted their Master studies at the IER Lahore for finding out the nature of school teacher's stress and stress management strategies. They concluded that most of the primary/ secondary school teachers were under stressful work situations. Although, 'style-stress relationship' and 'identification of stressors' were not within the scope of their research, yet the IER studies did provide an area of interest for further research.

As literature review shows, most of the studies regarding teachers' occupational stress were conducted at primary/ secondary school level, there is a need for such study at higher level particularly at education colleges, where the future teachers are produced. It may, however, be added that (to the knowledge of the researcher) no previous study in Pakistan sought to explore the relationship between head's leadership style and occupational stress of teacher-educators in education faculties. Therefore, a study was planned to explore the relationship between heads' leadership style and teachers' occupational stress in the teacher-education institutions. The results of the study, it is

hoped, will contribute to 'stress literature' and help in developing 'stress management programs' for teachers at all levels in Pakistan.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between Principal's leadership style and Teacher occupational stress as perceived by teachers of Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs) in Punjab (Pakistan). To achieve this purpose, the study addressed two core questions:

- (1) Is there any relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher occupational stress?
- (2) Is there any difference between males and females with respect to relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher occupational stress?

Based on the questions, following null hypotheses were formulated:

- H<sub>0</sub>1 There is no significant relationship between Principal's Leadership Style and Teacher's Occupational Stress.
- H<sub>0</sub>2 There is no significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of Teacher's Occupational Stress with Principal's Autocratic Leadership Style.
- H<sub>0</sub>3 There is no significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of Teacher's Occupational Stress with Principal's Democratic Leadership Style.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Population and Sample***

The population for the study was teachers of thirty three GCETs spread over different divisions and districts of Punjab province (Pakistan). Through purposive sampling, twelve GCETs (6 for males and 6 for females) having one hundred and forty two teachers (69 male and 73 female) working as subject specialists/ senior subject specialists, were taken as sample. Only such cities in Punjab were selected, where there were separate GCETs, both for males and females. Such cities were six in number:

LalaMusa, Kamalia, Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Rawalpindi-Islamabad. Rationale of the sample justifies its representation for the entire target population, because, (a) homogeneity of the population is, in general, very identical with special reference to the nature of demographics; (b) GCETs in Punjab are under the same administrative setup i.e. Directorate of Staff Development Lahore and Department of Education, Government of the Punjab; (c) GCETs in Punjab are affiliated with the University of Education, Lahore (Punjab), having the same prescribed scheme of studies; (d) GCETs in Punjab offer uniform teacher-education programs (BEd or both BEd & MEd) for pre-service elementary school teachers; (e) GCETs in Punjab have common evaluation system; and (f) sample represents all zones of Punjab.

### ***Delimitations***

The study was delimited to: (a) the principals and teachers having at least one-year working-experience at the same education college; (b) the perceptions of teachers and not the principals; (c) perceptions of teachers regarding only two leadership styles of principals viz democratic and autocratic; (d) stressors (sources of stress) and not manifestations of stress; and (g) reliance on teacher's self-report perceptions and not on observational evidence or medical support.

### ***Instruments***

Based upon the review of related literature, instruments of data collection, comprising of following two self-report questionnaires, were devised on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument consisted of two major questionnaires:

- (a) *Principal's Leadership Style Questionnaire (PLSQ)* comprising of 30 items (15 on democratic style and 15 on autocratic style) covering areas of concern such as policy determination, establishment of job activities, planning, job assessment, change management, academic freedom, building trust, motivation, consideration, integration, staff involvement, fairness, mentoring, representation, communication, decision-making, delegation, feedback, conflict resolution, persuasiveness, monitoring, and evaluation.

(b) *Teacher Occupational Stress Questionnaire* (TOSQ) comprising of 40 items, covering eight major categories of occupational stress, with five items under each:

- (i) Physical health concerns: Questions addressing physical exhaustion, fatigue, headaches, hypertension, and medical facilities.
- (ii) Emotional issues: Questions addressing emotional exhaustion, interpersonal demands, frustration, feeling depressed, and intra-inter group relationships.
- (iii) Teacher-Principal matters: Questions addressing task and role demands, management support, professional opportunities, effort-reward imbalance, and principal's accessibility.
- (iv) Teacher-Teacher matters: Questions addressing professional support from the colleagues, group cohesiveness, inter-personal conflicts, disagreement, and feelings of isolation.
- (v) Teacher-Student matters: Questions addressing class management, student's performance, discipline, and students' disruptive behavior.
- (vi) Teacher-College issues: Questions addressing organizational politics, college ecology, organizational culture, job satisfaction, and social support.
- (vii) Instructional matters: Questions addressing subject excellence, pedagogical competence, communication skills, instructional facilities, and career development opportunities.
- (viii) Time management concerns: Questions addressing workload, class schedules, too much paper work, no time to relax, and organizing time.

### ***Validation***

In order to develop a valid and reliable instrument, related literature both in theoretical and research framework was reviewed. Also the focus group and panel of experts were consulted for their critique of the draft instrument. Prior to administering the instrument to the selected sample, a pilot study on small scale was conducted. The focus

group, in the first phase comprised of six senior subject specialists of GCET Lahore. Feedback from the focus group was used to revise the items which were apparently ambiguous or did not correspond to the objectives of the study or poor in language context or had textual problems. In the second phase, the instrument was further improved after receiving the professional feedback from the panel of seven experts (university professors of education) considered by the committee as skillful and well-informed in the teacher-education discipline, particularly in the area/s of educational leadership; educational psychology; and educational research. The overall expert judgment helped the researcher in considering the instrument as valid. For *reliability* of the instrument, questionnaires were administered to ten senior subject specialists of GCET, Lahore (other than six previously consulted). For measuring internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient test was applied using SPSS to ensure reliability on an alpha level of 0.05. The reliability coefficients were  $\alpha = 0.850$  for PLSQ and  $\alpha = 0.959$  for TOSQ.

#### ***Data Collection***

Questionnaires in a package form along with detailed instructions were mailed to contact persons, who administered these questionnaires to all 142 teachers (69 male and 73 female) of twelve GCETs in Punjab. The contact persons returned the filled-in questionnaires through mail. One hundred and twenty eight teachers (62 male and 66 female) responded with return rate of 90%.

#### ***Data Analysis***

Pseudonyms (codes) for the individual responses and places (colleges) were used to protect identities. The data generated by the study were tabulated and analyzed. To test the hypotheses, Pearson product-moment correlation was applied. To determine significant differences in correlations, Fisher's z-test was conducted. For all the hypotheses, the significance level of 0.05 was set. The data were analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Sciences.

## Results

### Findings

Following were the major findings emerged from data analysis:

#### *Relationship between Principal's Leadership Style and Teacher's Occupational Stress*

Table 1 (Appendix 'A') shows that:

1. There is a positive correlation between autocratic leadership style and all the TOSQ stressor categories. This reveals a tendency of more stress for teachers (in all areas of teacher's occupational stress) when principal's leadership style is autocratic. The positive relationship was highly significant with TOSQ physical health concerns,  $r(128) = 0.232, p < 0.01$ ; TOSQ teacher-principal matters,  $r(128) = 0.558, p < 0.001$ ; and TOSQ total stress score,  $r(128) = 0.265, p < 0.01$ .
2. There is a negative correlation between democratic leadership style and all the TOSQ stressor categories (except for TOSQ emotional issues and TOSQ teacher-student matters where it has a positive correlation). This reveals a tendency of less stress for teachers when principal's leadership style is democratic. The negative relationship was highly significant with TOSQ teacher-principal matters,  $r(128) = -0.631, p < 0.001$ ; TOSQ teacher-college issues,  $r(128) = -0.255, p < 0.01$ ; and TOSQ total stress score,  $r(128) = -0.233, p < 0.01$ .
3. TOSQ emotional issues and TOSQ teacher-student matters have positive correlation with both autocratic style and democratic style. This reveals that there is more stress in these areas regardless of principal's leadership style.
4. TOSQ teacher-principal matters category has highly significant correlation with both autocratic and democratic leadership styles. There is highly significant positive correlation between TOSQ teacher-principal matters and principal's autocratic leadership style,  $r(128) = 0.558, p < 0.001$ . The negative correlation

between TOSQ teacher-principal matters and principal's democratic leadership style is also highly significant,  $r(128) = -0.631, p < 0.001$ .

5. Overall TOSQ score has a highly significant positive correlation with autocratic leadership style,  $r(128) = 0.265, p < 0.01$ . Overall TOSQ score has a highly significant negative correlation with democratic leadership style,  $r(128) = -0.233, p < 0.01$ .
6. The Pearson product-moment correlation test revealed a significant positive correlation between principal's autocratic leadership style and teacher's overall stress,  $r(128) = 0.265, p < 0.01$ . The Pearson product-moment correlation test revealed a significant negative correlation between principal's democratic leadership style and teacher's overall stress,  $r(128) = -0.233, p < 0.01$ . So the null hypothesis, "There is no significant relationship between Principal's Leadership Style and Teacher's Occupational Stress at 0.05 significance level", is rejected.

***Comparison between males and females with respect to relationship of Teacher's Occupational Stress with Principal's Autocratic Leadership Style***

Table 2 (Appendix 'A') shows that:

1. There is no significant difference between males and females with respect to correlation of teacher's occupational stress with principal's autocratic leadership style for all categories of TOSQ and also for overall stress score.
2. Males have a negative correlation between autocratic leadership style and TOSQ emotional issues (stress related to emotional issues is less when leadership style is autocratic), while females have a positive correlation showing trend towards significance (stress related to emotional issues is more when leadership style is autocratic). Although the difference is not significant, it approached significance,  $p = 0.060$ .
3. The null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of Teacher's Occupational Stress with Principal's Autocratic Leadership Style", is accepted for all TOSQ stress categories and also for overall stress score.

***Comparison between males and females with respect to relationship of Teacher's Occupational Stress with Principal's Democratic Leadership Style***

Table 3 (Appendix 'A') shows that:

1. There is significant difference between males and females with respect to correlation of teacher's occupational stress with principal's democratic leadership style for three categories of TOSQ i.e. TOSQ emotional issues, TOSQ instructional matters, TOSQ time management concerns.
2. Males have a positive correlation between democratic leadership style and TOSQ emotional issues (stress related to emotional issues is more when leadership style is democratic), while females have a negative correlation (stress related to emotional issues is less when leadership style is democratic). The difference is significant,  $z = 2.03$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .
3. Males have a highly significant negative correlation between democratic leadership style and TOSQ instructional matters (stress related to instructional matters is less when leadership style is democratic), while females have a positive correlation (stress related to instructional matters is more when leadership style is democratic). The difference is highly significant,  $z = -2.79$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .
4. Males have a positive correlation between democratic leadership style and TOSQ time management concerns (stress related to time management concerns is more when leadership style is democratic), while females have a highly significant negative correlation (stress related to time management concerns is less when leadership style is democratic). The difference is significant,  $z = 1.97$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .
5. The null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of Teacher's Occupational Stress with Principal's Democratic Leadership Style", is rejected for three TOSQ categories TOSQ emotional issues, TOSQ instructional matters, TOSQ time management

concerns. However it is accepted for other TOSQ categories and also for TOSQ overall score.

### **Conclusions**

On the basis of findings, following conclusions are drawn:

1. There is significant relationship between principal's leadership style and teacher's occupational stress.
2. There is a positive correlation between autocratic leadership style and all the TOSQ stressor categories. This reveals a tendency of more stress for teachers (in all areas of teacher's occupational stress) when principal's leadership style is autocratic. (Figure 1 - Appendix 'B')
3. There is a negative correlation between democratic leadership style and all the TOSQ stressor categories (except TOSQ emotional issues and TOSQ teacher-student matters where it has a positive correlation). This reveals a tendency of less stress for teachers when principal's leadership style is democratic. (Figure 2 - Appendix 'B')
4. TOSQ emotional issues and TOSQ teacher-student matters have positive correlation with both autocratic style and democratic style. This reveals that there is more stress in these areas regardless of principal's leadership style.
5. The most significant correlation is for the category TOSQ Teacher-Principal matters. There is highly significant positive correlation between TOSQ Teacher-Principal matters and PLSQ autocratic style, while there is highly significant negative correlation between TOSQ Teacher-Principal matters and PLSQ democratic style. (Figure 3 & 4 - Appendix 'B')
6. There is no significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of teacher's occupational stress with principal's autocratic leadership style.
7. There is significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of teacher's occupational stress with principal's democratic leadership style for three TOSQ categories i.e. TOSQ emotional issues, TOSQ instructional matters, TOSQ time management concerns. However, there is no

significant difference for other TOSQ categories and also for TOSQ overall score.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between Principal's leadership style and Teacher occupational stress as perceived by teachers of Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers in Punjab (Pakistan). The results of the study, in general, are consistent with theory and research. The major finding indicates that there is a significant relationship of principal's leadership style with teacher occupational stress. Also there is a positive correlation between autocratic leadership style and teacher occupational stress. This reveals a tendency of more stress for teachers when their principal's leadership style is autocratic. The study also indicates that there is no significant difference between males and females with respect to relationship of teacher's occupational stress with principal's autocratic leadership style. However, an important finding is that for TOSQ emotional issues category and the TOSQ teacher-student matters category, there is more stress regardless of principal's leadership style. Both these categories show positive correlation for both leadership styles. The findings also support the research that there is a negative correlation between democratic leadership style and occupational stress (overall TOSQ stress score and all TOSQ categories except above mentioned two i.e. TOSQ emotional issues and TOSQ teacher-student matters). This reveals a tendency of less stress for teachers when their principal's leadership style is democratic. An interesting finding is with respect to occupational stress in the area of instructional matters. Stress related to this area, in case of male teachers is less when leadership style is democratic, while females have more stress when leadership style is democratic. This may be due to the reason that females, probably, have a preference for task-oriented approach, although it is difficult to generalize. There are four important implications: the first demands a paradigm shift from stereotype organizations to *learning organizations* (a term used by Senge, 2007) in which all members work collaboratively for institution's vision and have a voice in decision making; the second concerns the educational leaders development; the third involves the conditions under which the heads and teachers work; and the fourth justifies addressing teacher's occupational stress.

### Recommendations

Since the present study is limited in scope and is relied on teachers' self-report perceptions only, it is difficult to make strong generalizations. It is, therefore, recommended that future research should: (1) be replicated in teacher education colleges/institutes with a larger sample size; (2) employ a longitudinal design using quantitative and qualitative paradigms (mixed methods) for gaining insights to the causes of occupational stress over an extended period of time through individual or group interviews as well as through observations; (3) examine the effect of leadership style and occupational stress on the performance of the teachers, and most importantly their students' performance; (4) explore as to why some teachers cope with occupational stress better than others; (5) find out as to how some teachers and heads turn their distress into eustress; (6) determine the stress coping strategies; and (7) examine the effect of education reforms on stress level.

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**Appendix 'A'**

**Table 1**

Pearson Correlation Coefficients of TOSQ Stressors with PLSQ Autocratic Style and PLSQ Democratic Style

<i>TOSQ Stressor</i>	<i>PLSQ Autocratic Style</i>		<i>PLSQ Democratic Style</i>	
	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Physical health concerns	.232**	.008	-.029	.746
Emotional issues	.052	.557	.002	.981
Teacher-Principal matters	.558**	.000	-.631**	.000
Teacher-Teacher matters	.109	.220	-.072	.422
Teacher-Student matters	.096	.279	.038	.666
Teacher-College issues	.139	.118	-.255**	.004
Instructional matters	.176*	.047	-.110	.215
Time management concerns	.080	.367	-.159	.074
Total stress score	.265**	.003	-.233**	.008

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Listwise N=128

**Table 2**

Comparison of Males and Females for Pearson Correlation Coefficients of PLSQ Autocratic Leadership Style and TOSQ Stressors

<i>TOSQ Stressor</i>	<i>PLSQ Autocratic Leadership Style</i>							
	Male			Female			Comparison	
	N	Pearson r	Sig.	N	Pearson r	Sig.	z	Sig.
Physical health concerns	62	.242	.058	66	.281*	.022	-0.23	0.818
Emotional issues	62	-.101	.436	66	.235	.058	-1.88	0.060
Teacher-Principal matters	62	.570**	.000	66	.554**	.000	0.13	0.896
Teacher-Teacher matters	62	-.023	.859	66	.238	.055	-1.47	0.141
Teacher-Student matters	62	.127	.327	66	.043	.731	0.47	0.638
Teacher-College issues	62	.107	.408	66	.163	.191	-0.31	0.756
Instructional matters	62	.192	.135	66	.130	.297	0.35	0.726
Time management concerns	62	-.038	.772	66	.216	.082	-1.42	0.155
Total stress score	62	.212	.098	66	.329**	.007	-0.7	0.483

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3**

Comparison of Males and Females for Pearson Correlation Coefficients of PLSQ Democratic Leadership Style and TOSQ Stressors

<i>TOSQ Stressor</i>	<i>PLSQ Democratic Leadership Style</i>							
	Male			Female			Comparison	
	N	Pearson r	Sig.	N	Pearson r	Sig.	z	Sig.
Physical health concerns	62	-.118	.362	66	.039	.755	-0.87	0.384
Emotional issues	62	.187	.146	66	-.177	.154	2.03 <sup>†</sup>	0.042
Teacher-Principal matters	62	-.685**	.000	66	-.575**	.000	-1.01	0.312
Teacher-Teacher matters	62	.076	.555	66	-.195	.117	1.51	0.13
Teacher-Student matters	62	.026	.838	66	.052	.681	-0.14	0.888
Teacher-College issues	62	-.163	.206	66	-.344**	.005	1.07	0.284
Instructional matters	62	-.364**	.004	66	.124	.322	-2.79 <sup>††</sup>	0.005
Time management concerns	62	.017	.898	66	-.327**	.007	1.97 <sup>†</sup>	0.048
Total stress score	62	-.209	.102	66	-.257*	.037	0.28	0.779

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

†† Correlation difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

† Correlation difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix 'B'

Figure 1  
Autocratic Leadership Style and Overall Stress

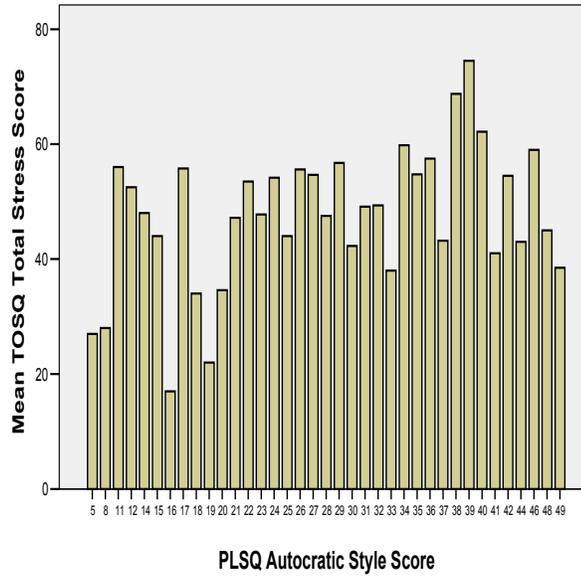
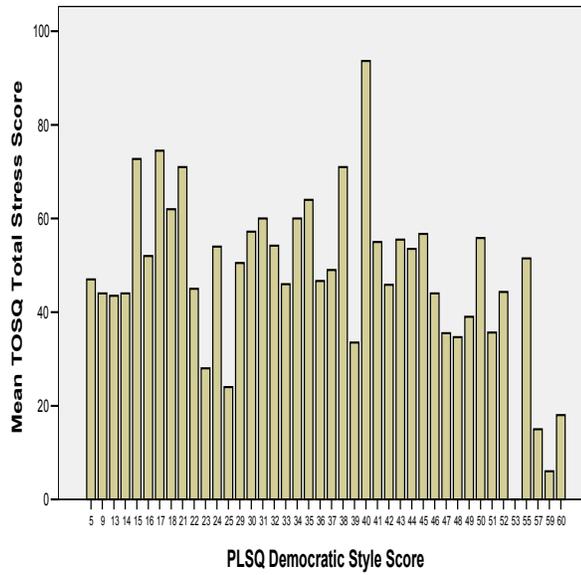
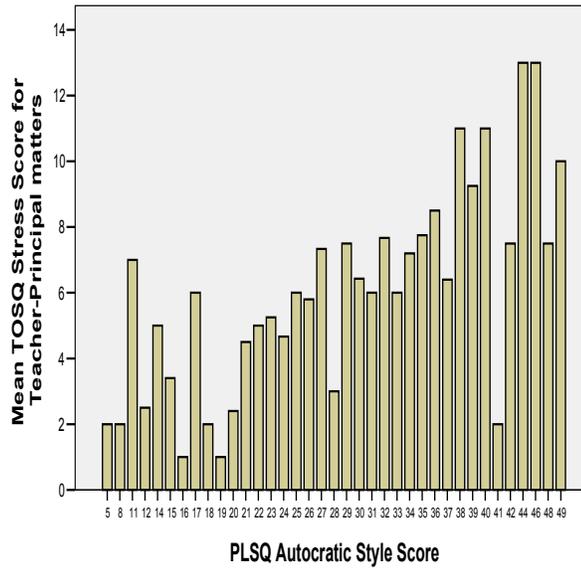


Figure 2  
Democratic Leadership Style and Overall Stress



**Figure 3**  
Autocratic Leadership Style and stress related to Teacher-Principal matters



**Figure 4**  
Democratic Leadership Style and stress related to Teacher-Principal matters

