THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHERS' EFFICACY: WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AS A MEDIATOR AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AS A MODERATOR IN SAUDI ARABIAN PRESCHOOLS

ALAKLABI SAMIRA ABDULLAH M

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2025

THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHERS' EFFICACY: WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AS A MEDIATOR AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AS A MODERATOR IN SAUDI ARABIAN PRESCHOOLS

by

ALAKLABI SAMIRA ABDULLAH M

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank Allah the Almighty for health, wellbeing, and the wisdom to complete this project. Writing this dissertation has indeed been a learning experience in many ways. I realize now that the entire journey has led me to discover new ways of thinking and reach some interesting findings. It would not have been possible without a few individuals to whom I would especially like to extend my thanks.

My most sincere appreciation goes to my husband, Abdullah, for his excellent patience, support, care, and encouragement during my studies. I am most indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Al-Amin bin Mydin, for his supervision and constant support. His invaluable assistance with constructive comments and suggestions throughout the study and the dissertation write-up has contributed to the success of this research. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to the examiners and university academicians and staff at the School of Educational Studies for their invaluable feedback, guidance, and support. Their dedication to academic excellence has greatly enriched my research experience. I could not have progressed further without thanking my family for their endless love, encouragement, and support. My final thanks go to all the respondents who provided me with the data. Their collaboration and willingness to participate were crucial in developing this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

iv

APPENDICES

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CA	Cronbach's Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
IL	Instructional Leadership
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
TSE	Teacher Self-Efficacy
TSES	Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WS	Workplace Spirituality

LIST OF APPENDICES

PENGARUH KEPIMPINAN INSTRUKSIONAL TERHADAP EFIKASI GURU: SPIRITUALITI DI TEMPAT KERJA SEBAGAI MEDIATOR DAN KOMUNITI PEMBELAJARAN PROFESIONAL SEBAGAI MODERATOR DI PRASEKOLAH ARAB SAUDI

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyelidiki pengaruh kepimpinan instruksional terhadap efikasi kendiri guru di tadika di Dammam, Alhasa, dan Aljubail, Wilayah Timur, Arab Saudi, dengan spiritualiti tempat kerja sebagai perantara dan komuniti pembelajaran profesional (PLC) sebagai moderator. Ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana amalan kepimpinan meningkatkan keyakinan dan keberkesanan guru dalam persekitaran pendidikan yang kaya dengan budaya. Asas teori kajian ini berakar pada Teori Kepimpinan Transformasi, disokong oleh Teori Kognitif Sosial dan Teori Spiritualiti Tempat Kerja, yang menyediakan kerangka kerja yang kukuh untuk meneroka dinamik antara kepimpinan instruksional, efikasi kendiri guru, dan spiritualiti tempat kerja. Pendekatan kuantitatif telah digunakan, menggunakan soal selidik yang disesuaikan untuk disesuaikan dengan konteks budaya. Data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS untuk statistik deskriptif dan SmartPLS untuk Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kepimpinan instruksional secara signifikan meningkatkan efikasi kendiri guru, terutamanya melalui pengantaraan spiritualiti tempat kerja ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), dengan komuniti pembelajaran profesional (PLC) yang kuat memperkukuhkan lagi hubungan ini ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.012$). Spiritualiti tempat kerja menjelaskan 42% daripada varians, menekankan peranannya yang penting dalam meningkatkan keyakinan dan kesejahteraan guru. Hasil ini mencadangkan bahawa pemimpin pendidikan harus

memberi keutamaan kepada penciptaan persekitaran yangmenyokong spirituality untuk meningkatkan efikasi kendiri guru serta menggalakkan kolaborasi melalui PLC yang kukuh. Penggubal dasar digalakkan untuk menyepadukan amalan kepimpinan instruksional dengan kerohanian tempat kerja untuk meningkatkan pembangunan guru dan meningkatkan hasil pendidikan. Dengan menyelaraskan amalan kepimpinan dengan kesejahteraan rohani dan etika guru, dasar boleh memupuk persekitaran pendidikan yang lebih menyokong dan berkesan.

THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHERS' EFFICACY: WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AS A MEDIATOR AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AS A MODERATOR IN SAUDI ARABIAN PRESCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of instructional leadership on teachers' self-efficacy in preschools in Dammam, Alhasa, and Aljubail, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia, with workplace spirituality as a mediator and professional learning communities (PLC) as a moderator. The research aimed to understand how leadership practices enhance teacher confidence and effectiveness within a culturally rich educational environment. The theoretical foundations are anchored in Instructional Leadership Theory, supported by Social Cognitive Theory and Workplace Spirituality Theory, providing a robust framework for exploring the dynamics between instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and workplace spirituality. A quantitative approach was employed, using a questionnaire adapted to suit the cultural context. Data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings show that instructional leadership significantly enhances teachers' self-efficacy, primarily through the mediation of workplace spirituality ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), with strong PLC further strengthening this relationship ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.012$). Workplace spirituality accounts for 42% of the variance, highlighting its critical role in boosting teacher confidence and well-being. These results suggest that educational leaders should prioritize creating spiritually supportive environments to enhance teacher self-efficacy and foster collaboration through strong PLCs. Policymakers are encouraged to

integrate instructional leadership practices with workplace spirituality to enhance teacher development and improve educational outcomes. Policies can foster a more supportive and effective educational environment by aligning leadership practices with teachers' spiritual and ethical well-being.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the influence of instructional leadership (IL) on teachers' self- efficacy (TSE) in Saudi Arabian preschools. Early childhood education (ECE), specifically preschools, play a crucial role in national development, making instructional quality and effective leadership essential (Fairos & Mydin, 2022; Bashayr, 2022). Fairos and Mydin (2022) highlight how Instructional leadership by preschool principals enhances teachers' self-efficacy and improves teaching effectiveness. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's ongoing educational reforms emphasize professional development as key to improving teacher efficacy and educational outcomes (Bashayr, 2022).

Saudi Arabia has made significant investments to modernize preschool education to meet 21st-century demands, with leadership quality and teacher self-efficacy identified as critical to achieving excellence (CEDA, 2016; Campbell-Barr & Leeson, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Hoy & Spero, 2005). Effective IL and TSE are recognized as essential components of strong national education systems (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 2000; Hallinger, 2012), with high-quality preschool programs linked to positive child development and academic success (Waniganayake, 2014). As the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia undergoes reform, school leaders are encouraged to exercise greater autonomy to improve student outcomes (Al-Sudais, 2018; Alghamdi & Li, 2019; Almalki & Ganapathy, 2021; Alzaidi, 2018).

This study examines the relationship between IL and TSE in Saudi preschools, the mediating role of workplace spirituality (WS) and the moderating effect of professional learning communities (PLC). The theoretical foundations of this study are anchored in Instructional Leadership Theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), supported by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) and Workplace Spirituality Theory (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003), providing a framework for analyzing how IL practices influence teachers' instructional beliefs, spiritual work environments, and collaborative cultures.

Given Saudi Arabia's unique socio-cultural context and the emphasis on educational reform in Vision 2030 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023), understanding the factors affecting TSE in preschools is critical. Despite significant investments, gaps remain in the literature regarding the impact of leadership and spirituality on TSE. This study addresses these gaps using a quantitative methodology, employing validated instruments such as the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger & Wang, 2013) and the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The findings provide actionable recommendations for improving IL, fostering supportive spiritual work environments, and promoting collaborative professional cultures in Saudi preschools.

1.2   Background of Research

Saudi Arabia's educational sector is undergoing significant transformation driven by Saudi Vision 2030, which seeks to diversify the economy, reduce oil dependency, andimprove public services, including education (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023). Early childhood education (ECE) is a key focus due to its role in shaping lifelong learning and cognitive, social, and emotional development (UNESCO,

2022). High-quality ECE is crucial for promoting school readiness and long-term academic success(Heckman, 2006). Despite policy reforms, increased funding, and efforts to enhance preschool quality and accessibility, challenges such as disparities between public andprivate institutions, limited rural access, and a shortage of qualified teachers persist (Alghamdi & Li, 2019; Almalki & Ganapathy, 2022).

The leadership of school principals is critical in implementing educational reforms, with significant global attention placed on instructional leadership (IL) as a key factor in understanding school efficacy. A study by Acton (2021) highlighted the vital role school leaders play in effecting change within educational institutions. Instructional leadership, which includes setting clear academic goals, offering professional development opportunities, and fostering environments conducive to effective teaching, is pivotal in addressing challenges related to teaching and learning, especially in preschools (Hallinger & Wang, 2013). School principals who act as instructional leaders create environments encouraging teacher growth, focusing on professional development to enhance student learning (Dorukbaşi & Cansoy, 2024).

In Saudi Arabia, instructional leadership must navigate cultural, religious, and social complexities while aligning educational practices with national priorities and Islamic values (Alghamdi, 2019). Although instructional leadership has garnered significant attention in developing countries, empirical studies on its relationship with instruction and learning are still limited. Researchers have called for more studies that explore these dynamics in non-Western countries, particularly in contexts like Saudi Arabia (Bellibaş et al., 2022; Dorukbaşi & Cansoy, 2024; Hallinger et al., 2020). This study addresses this call by investigating the direct and indirect relationships between instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy (TSE), and professional learning communities (PLCs) in Saudi Arabian preschools. The study also emphasizes the

mediating role of workplace spirituality in shaping teacher self-efficacy within this context.

Teacher self-efficacy (TSE), which refers to teachers' belief in their ability to perform teaching tasks effectively and positively influence student outcomes (Bandura, 1997), is a crucial factor for success in education. High levels of TSE are strongly correlated with greater motivation, improved teaching practices, and increased student engagement. Teachers with high TSE are more likely to adopt innovative teaching strategies, persevere through challenges, and foster positive classroom environments (Liu et al., 2020; Saad & Sankaran, 2021). Furthermore, TSE has been shown to enhance student achievement, as teachers with high self-efficacy tend to engage students more effectively and address their diverse needs (Alanoglu, 2022; Karakose, 2024). By supporting teacher self-efficacy, instructional leadership directly influences teacher performance and student outcomes (Ma & Marion, 2019; Jalapang & Raman, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, TSE is shaped by cultural expectations, hierarchical structures, and the support teachers receive (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020).

Workplace spirituality (WS), defined as the sense of purpose, meaning, and connectedness in the work environment (Milliman et al., 2003), is key in enhancing teacher self-efficacy. In Saudi Arabia, WS is particularly relevant due to the influence of Islamic principles, which emphasize integrating faith into all aspects of life, including work. Research indicates that spiritually enriched work environments, characterized by trust, respect, and collaboration, improve teacher self-efficacy and teaching effectiveness (Pawar, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). Instructional leadership practices that prioritize teacher well-being and ethical values foster workplace spirituality, thus enhancing teacher self-efficacy (Saad & Sankaran, 2021; Elfira et al., 2024). A spiritually positive school climate, nurtured by school leaders, boosts

teachers' motivation, resilience, and performance (Ma & Marion, 2019; Jalapang & Raman, 2020). Consequently, WS mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) also play a critical role in the Saudi educational system. PLCs provide numerous benefits for teachers, schools, and students, including enhanced teacher development and improved student outcomes. Teachers who engage in PLCs are more likely to adopt effective teaching practices, and school leaders play a key role in fostering a positive school culture that supports PLC implementation. School principals must balance instructional leadership with operational duties, overseeing resources, networks, and infrastructure to ensure successful PLC integration. Principals must develop pedagogical tools and strategies aligned with the school's shared vision. Effective school leadership is crucial for successful PLC implementation, contributing to overall school improvement (Mohd Yusoff & Ismail, 2019; Hallinger et al., 2020; Sebastian et al., 2019). Over the past few decades, PLCs have become central to educational reform, fostering collaborative learning among educators (Zhang et al., 2023). Since the concept of PLCs first emerged in scholarly literature in the 1990s, it has garnered attention for its role in improving teaching practices and outcomes (Lee et al., 2022). Recent studies have shown that schools implementing PLCs experience significant improvements in teacher effectiveness and student performance (Za'aba & Alias, 2024).

Zheng et al. (2019) highlight the role of school leadership in fostering PLCs that not only enhance teacher collaboration but also significantly improve teacher self-efficacy by creating opportunities for reflective and shared practices. Instructional leadership plays a vital role in promoting effective teaching and learning, particularly by supporting teachers' professional development through PLCs (Za'aba & Alias,

2024). PLCs, which foster collaboration through shared leadership, inquiry, and professional development, align with Vision 2030's goal of cultivating lifelong learning and cooperation among teachers (DuFour, 2004). PLCs provide educators with a platform to share best practices, address challenges, and adapt to new standards (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008).

While the theoretical connections between IL, WS, and PLCs are well-established, empirical research on how these constructs collectively influence TSE remains limited (Elfira et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2020; Ma & Marion, 2019; Pawar, 2020). This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the interactions between these variables and their collective impact on TSE, particularly within the context of Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study will offer insights into how instructional leadership, workplace spirituality, and PLCs can be leveraged to improve educational outcomes in Saudi preschools, providing practical recommendations for educational policy and practice.

1.2.1   Preschool in Saudi Arabia

The KSA, located on the Arabian Peninsula, is an independent Arab nation governed by a hereditary monarchy, with a Council of Ministers overseeing various sectors, including education. The MOE is responsible for preschool education in the country. Formal preschool education in Saudi Arabia began in the mid-20th century and expanded significantly following the success of a model in Makkah (Rabaah et al., 2016).

The process of hiring preschool teachers in the KSA follows established standards, requiring specific educational and certification qualifications, typically obtained through ECE degrees or equivalent teacher training programs (Allehyani &

Alfayez, 2022). These requirements ensure that teachers possess the necessary knowledge and skills, including child psychology and effective classroom management, to create a nurturing learning environment for young students. The MOE thoroughly administers preschool accreditation and teacher selection (Alghamdi & Li, 2019), with a significant proliferation in the number of preschools from roughly 1,500 to over 3,000 between 2013 to 2016 (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016). As of 2022, public preschools hosted 256,854 students across 3,377 schools, with a 17% enrolment rate. Despite this increase, the rate remains significantly lower than the regional average of 64.4%, marking the lowest among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (MOE, 2022). Furthermore, a gap in quality and curriculum between private and public preschools is observed, with private institutions often having more resources and higher enrolment, despite being fewer in number (Almalki & Ganapathy, 2021; Al-Sudais, 2018).

The education system consists of three primary stages: preschool, primary school, and secondary school, with preschool as the first phase. Although preschool attendance is not mandatory, the government strongly encourages it, and preschools come in two types: public and private, both regulated by the MOE (Al- Sudais, 2018; Alghamdi & Li, 2019). The primary goal of preschool education in the KSA is to develop individuals with strong character, prepare for future academic endeavors and be capable of contributing meaningfully to the nation's progress.

To achieve these objectives, the MOE has initiated various efforts, including increasing media exposure for children, enhancing ECE research, and expanding preschool availability, all while maintaining quality through standardized, evidence-based practices (MOE, 2022). Women exclusively hold preschool leadership, as their leadership style is seen as aligning with the nurturing aspect of patience that deemed

essential in ECE. However, public preschools have gender-diverse student populations and offer free education, supported by government funding (Alasimi, 2018). National strategies have been established to address these challenges, aiming to increase preschool enrolment (Rabaah et al., 2016), through exploring the influenceof instructional leadership on teachers' self-efficacy in this context, hence, this study aims to contribute to the discussion on improving early childhood education in KSA and strengthening the foundation of the nation's educational future.

The KSA is undergoing a transformative phase in its educational system, driven by the goals set forth in Saudi Vision 2030. This ambitious vision seeks to diversify the economy, reduce reliance on oil, and establish a knowledge-based economy through comprehensive reforms across various sectors, including education (Saudi Vision 2030, 2024). The Ministry of Education has been pivotal in implementing these reforms, with significant emphasis on improving ECE, modernizing curricula, and enhancing teacher development. The educational system is deeply influenced by Islamic values, which permeate all levels of education and play a crucial role in shaping educational policies and practices (Almalki & Ganapathy, 2021).

1.2.2   Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership, traditionally associated with school principals, is often viewed through the lens of their expertise in teaching and curriculum development (Mitchell & Castle, 2005). In Saudi Arabian preschools, the role of instructional leadership is pivotal in influencing teachers' practices, curriculum development, and overall educational approaches, thereby shaping the learning environment for young children (Alghamdi & Li, 2019). Sudais (2018) suggests that further exploration of

this dynamic could provide valuable insights into enhancing teachers' professional development through instructional leadership.

At its core, instructional leadership extends beyond simply initiating change; it involves a strategic approach to defining the school's mission, managing instructional programs, and fostering a supportive learning environment. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education (MOE) mandates that preschool directors assess the need for improvements and implement necessary changes (Alameen et al., 2015; Sholikhah & Li, 2019).

Principals play a crucial role in overseeing the instructional program, which includes supervising and evaluating teaching, coordinating curricula, and monitoring student progress (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). Zaw and Phong (2020) emphasize the importance of effectively allocating instructional time. Monitoring student progress is a key aspect of instructional leadership, involving continuous feedback and supervision of overall student performance (Ly, 2020; Ma & Marion, 2021). This encompasses activities such as classroom visits, teacher assessments, and recognition of achievements (Pearce, 2017). Principals also significantly influence teachers' professional growth by organizing and leading staff development initiatives, which are crucial to the quality of education (Flores, 2015).

The impact of national policy, particularly in Saudi Arabia, both constrains and shapes the framework within which instructional leadership operates (Lightfoot, 2016). This framework includes the development of early childhood education curricula and materials, often in collaboration with governmental and international bodies. Instructional leaders must create a conducive learning climate that nurtures teacher development, provides constructive feedback, and incentives for effective

teaching and learning (Francera & Bliss, 2011). They are also tasked with ensuring the availability of resources, addressing staff needs, and guiding the school community toward achieving its educational objectives (Moluayonge & Park, 2017; Alasimi, 2018; Hallinger & Wang, 2013).

This research defines instructional leadership (IL) as the coordinated roles and actions of school principals aimed at influencing school management, teaching quality, and student outcomes. Specifically, IL encompasses leadership behaviors designed to improve educational practices and enhance teaching and learning within the school. To measure instructional leadership in this study, we draw on three dimensions outlined in the PIMRS framework developed by Hallinger and Wang (2013): (1) defining the school's mission, (2) managing the instructional program, and (3) promoting a positive school learning climate. Instructional leadership involves a range of actions and strategies implemented by school leaders to elevate the quality of education through direct and indirect influences on teaching and learning processes (Hallinger, 2003).

In the Saudi context, instructional leadership is characterized by a centralized approach in which school principals and administrators are responsible for implementing national educational policies, ensuring alignment with Islamic values, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Almalki & Ganapathy, 2021). The core functions of instructional leadership include defining and communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, promoting professional development, and creating a supportive learning environment (Hallinger & Wang, 2013).

The three dimensions of instructional leadership, adapted from Hallinger and Wang's (2013) framework, are integral to understanding the multifaceted nature of

leadership in educational institutions, particularly when tailored to the Saudi educational environment. Framing and Communicating School Goals is essential for articulating a clear vision and mission that aligns with both national priorities and Islamic values, ensuring that academic and moral goals are integrated into daily practices (Al-Sudais, 2024). This process is crucial for establishing a shared sense of purpose among the school community (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Supervising and Evaluating Instruction involves monitoring teaching practices and providing feedback to ensure consistency with Islamic values and the Ministry of Education's standards (Hallinger & Wang, 2013). This is vital in enhancing teacher self-efficacy and instructional strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Wang et al., 2018). Promoting Professional Development emphasizes offering teachers growth opportunities through workshops and access to advanced training. Such initiatives promote a culture of lifelong learning, which is essential in the context of the rapidly evolving Saudi educational landscape (DuFour, 2004; Lambersky, 2016).

Furthermore, instructional leaders are responsible for Creating a Supportive Learning Environment, ensuring that resources are effectively managed, instructional time is protected, and a positive learning climate is maintained (Ross & Gray, 2006). In Saudi Arabia, this also involves upholding Islamic principles such as community building and ethical conduct (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009; Ali et al., 2021).

However, challenges and opportunities unique to the Saudi context must also be considered. Educational leaders must navigate the delicate balance between traditional Islamic values and modern educational practices, overcoming cultural sensitivities and addressing disparities in resources between urban and rural areas (Alghamdi & Li, 2019; Almalki & Ganapathy, 2021). Despite these challenges, the

Vision 2030 reforms such as investments in digital infrastructure and STEM programs offer significant opportunities for instructional leaders to drive positive change and improve both teacher self-efficacy and student outcomes (Balogun et al., 2023; Zakeri et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2023).

1.2.3 Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) refers to teachers' beliefs in their ability to effectively plan, organize, and execute classroom activities to achieve educational goals. This belief in one's capabilities significantly predicts classroom quality, teaching effectiveness, and student learning outcomes. Ciyer et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of self-confidence in preschool teachers, arguing that teachers may struggle to foster student success and performance without a strong sense of self-efficacy. Competence alone, when not accompanied by confidence, can lead to hesitation and inconsistency, ultimately undermining the quality of teaching. Bandura (1997) underscores that self-efficacy is pivotal to teaching and learning, as it significantly influences motivation, cognitive processes, behavior, teaching effectiveness, and decision-making. Self-efficacy is rooted in an individual's belief in their capabilities, which may not always align with their actual skill level. In this regard, Pearce (2017) contends that teachers' beliefs about their self-efficacy are strongly linked to their performance and overall effectiveness.

In the context of this study, TSE refers specifically to a teacher's belief in their ability to engage students, manage classrooms, and foster academic achievement, particularly within the unique cultural and organizational framework of Saudi Arabia. Teacher self-efficacy is a multidimensional construct, encompassing beliefs about the ability to engage students, implement instructional strategies, and maintain effective

classroom management. Rooted in Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, TSE is recognized as a critical factor influencing a teacher's motivation, instructional practices, and perseverance in the face of challenges. Bandura identified four key sources shaping self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. These sources are instrumental in understanding how teachers in KSA develop their sense of efficacy, especially in the context of a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods, set challenging goals, and create a supportive learning environment (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Such teachers typically exhibit resilience, strong commitment to student achievement, and desire continuous professional development. These attributes are vital for aligning with the broader educational goals outlined in Saudi Vision 2030 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2024), which emphasizes modernization and global readiness.

The study also draws on the work of Guo et al. (2010), which suggests that instructional leadership significantly enhances teachers' self-efficacy. In assessing teacher self-efficacy, this research utilizes quantitative methods, specifically the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), which measures three dimensions of TSE: (1) efficacy in student engagement, (2) efficacy in instructional strategies, and (3) efficacy in classroom management. This instrument is well-suited to capturing teachers' perceived self-efficacy across various aspects of teaching practice. Additionally, while qualitative methods such as interviews and observations offer deeper insights into teachers' experiences and self-perceptions, this study focuses on quantitative analysis.

In the Saudi context, where much of the existing research on teacher self-efficacy is based on Western frameworks, this study provides valuable insights by contextualizing TSE within the national educational reforms driven by Vision 2030. The findings highlight the importance of considering cultural and organizational factors, such as job security and religious values, which may indirectly influence the development of self-efficacy beliefs among teachers in KSA (Alwaleedi, 2017; Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). By aligning the concept of teacher self-efficacy with the national education strategy, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Saudi teachers can be empowered to meet the challenges of a globalized educational environment.

The unique cultural context of Saudi Arabia plays a significant role in shaping teacher self-efficacy. The national education reforms under Vision 2030 aim to modernize the educational system and prepare students for a globalized world. Teachers in Saudi Arabia are at the forefront of these reforms and are expected to implement new curricula, adopt innovative teaching technologies, and foster critical thinking skills among students (Saudi Vision 2030, 2024). High teacher self-efficacy is crucial for the success of these reforms, as teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to embrace change, implement new teaching strategies, and support students' development in line with the goals of Vision 2030.

Teacher self-efficacy in Saudi Arabian preschools is influenced by various factors, including instructional leadership, workplace spirituality, and professional learning communities (PLCs). These factors interact within the specific cultural and organizational context of Saudi Arabia, shaping teachers' beliefs in their capabilities and ultimately impacting student learning outcomes. This study highlights the importance of a holistic approach to understanding and enhancing teacher self-

efficacy, which is essential for improving educational practices and outcomes in Saudi Arabian preschools.

1.2.4 Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality (WS), defined by Dimitrov (2012), refers to how employees express their values and seek meaning through their work. It encompasses three key dimensions: finding meaning in work, fostering a sense of community, and aligning with the organization's values. These aspects are believed to enhance the school environment and increase staff commitment significantly (Milliman et al., 2003).

In this study, workplace spirituality is defined as the recognition of an individual's inner life, which is nourished by meaningful work and performed within the context of a community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). In educational settings, WS involves a sense of purpose, connection, and alignment between an individual's values and the organization's mission. Workplace spirituality holds particular significance in Saudi Arabia, where Islamic values profoundly shape all aspects of life. It blends spiritual beliefs with professional duties, fostering a holistic work environment supporting personal and professional growth.

Workplace spirituality ensures that teachers fulfill their duties and embody the ethical and moral standards expected within an Islamic educational context (Fry, 2003; Milliman et al., 2003). It significantly impacts various aspects of the educational environment, including teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall well-being. Teachers who perceive a high level of WS are more likely to experience job satisfaction and a greater sense of purpose. This, in turn,

enhances their self-efficacy and deepens their commitment to the school (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Van der Walt, 2018).

In the Saudi context, where religion and spirituality are deeply intertwined with daily life, WS plays a pivotal role in creating a fulfilling and motivating work environment. The role of instructional leadership (IL) in fostering WS is crucial. In Saudi Arabia, instructional leaders are responsible for administrative and educational functions and are tasked with ensuring that the school environment reflects Islamic values. By promoting ethical conduct, providing spiritual support, and fostering a sense of community, IL can enhance teachers' spiritual well-being, positively impacting their performance and job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2021; Shen et al., 2023).

Instructional leadership can further influence the perception of meaningful work by setting clear, value-driven goals aligning with the school's mission and Islamic teachings. This alignment helps teachers understand the broader impact of their work, not just in academic terms but also in contributing to students' moral and spiritual development (Khasawneh, 2022). As a result, teachers are more likely to view their work as meaningful and in harmony with their personal beliefs, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and effectiveness (Fry, 2003).

While implementing and nurturing workplace spirituality in Saudi schools presents challenges, it also offers significant opportunities. One primary challenge is balancing traditional Islamic values with modern educational practices. Islamic teachings provide a strong ethical framework, yet integrating contemporary pedagogical methods and technologies requires careful consideration to avoid conflicts with cultural and religious norms (Alghamdi & Li, 2019). However, there are considerable opportunities to leverage workplace spirituality to boost teacher

engagement and student outcomes. Schools can develop programs that focus on spiritual development, community building, and ethical education, aligning with teachers' spiritual and professional needs (Balogun et al., 2023). Such initiatives can also attract and retain talented educators who seek a work environment that nurtures their professional and spiritual growth.

1.2.5 Professional Learning Community

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a vital strategy for fostering a collaborative school culture that improves teaching quality and enhances student learning outcomes. PLCs are groups of educators committed to collectively improving teaching and learning practices. They provide a platform for teachers to share innovative approaches, create engaging learning environments, and ultimately enhance student achievement (Wood & Alshammari, 2021). Toole and Louis (2002) describe PLCs as groups that engage in reflection and collaboration around teaching practices, with a primary focus on student learning. Within these communities, educators work together to deepen their professional knowledge, which directly influences teaching methods, school administration, and leadership in educational settings.

Hord (1997), a pioneer of the PLC concept in education, identifies them as a valuable tool for addressing challenges and achieving academic goals within schools. DuFour (2016) reaffirms the significance of PLCs, emphasizing their essential role in promoting professional development and improving teaching skills. Research has further demonstrated a positive correlation between school development, students' academic performance, and PLC activities, highlighting the central role PLCs play in cultivating a dynamic school culture (Reichstetter, 2016). The connection between

effective PLCs and student achievement has been underscored by Harris et al. (2019), who stress that high-quality teaching is crucial to student success.

An effective PLC relies on a school culture of collaboration and trust (Wang, 2016), with leadership playing a critical role in establishing and sustaining these communities (Hallinger, 2012). Various PLC models exist, with Hord's (1997) model being widely recognized and validated in academic research (Eaker & Gonzalez, 2006; Wilson, 2016). This study will adopt Hord's model due to its reliability and consistency in assessing PLCs worldwide.

In this research, PLCs are defined as collaborative groups of educators within a school setting who work together to enhance teaching practices, improve student learning outcomes, and share knowledge and expertise. These communities are characterized by a collective commitment to ongoing professional development, reflective dialogue on teaching strategies, and a focus on student achievement. PLCs foster a collaborative and supportive environment where educators collaborate, learn from one another, and collectively work to improve the quality of education within their institutions.

Despite their proven effectiveness, PLCs have not been widely implemented in Saudi Arabian preschools. Bin Ateeq (2018) discovered that while some Saudi schools have established PLCs, there remains a disparity compared to schools without PLCs. In the context of Saudi Arabia's educational reforms, PLCs have gained increasing importance as a mechanism for professional development and instructional improvement. PLCs offer a structured approach for teachers to engage in reflective practice, share expertise, and collectively address educational challenges—critical

components of fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 2018).

PLCs play a critical role in professional development by providing continuous opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge. Research has demonstrated that effective PLCs contribute to improved teaching practices, higher levels of teacher efficacy, and better student outcomes (Hord, 2018; Sun et al., 2023). In Saudi Arabia, where educational reforms are rapidly transforming the landscape, PLCs offer a structured way for teachers to adapt to new curricula, technologies, and pedagogical approaches.

Moreover, PLCs help cultivate a collaborative school culture that values collective responsibility for student success. This is particularly significant in Saudi schools, where there is a strong emphasis on moral and ethical education (Bin Ateeq, 2018). Through collaboration in PLCs, teachers can develop integrated approaches that combine academic rigor with the inculcation of Islamic values, providing a holistic education to students.

The implementation and sustainability of PLCs in Saudi Arabia present several challenges, including time constraints, varying levels of teacher readiness, and the need for administrative support. In a centralized educational system, where directives often come from the top, fostering a culture of shared leadership and collective inquiry can be difficult (Khasawneh, 2022). Additionally, aligning PLCs with existing professional development structures requires careful planning and alignment with national educational goals. However, despite these challenges, significant opportunities exist to leverage PLCs for educational improvement.

The Saudi government's commitment to enhancing teacher quality and promoting professional development under Vision 2030 provides a favorable environment for PLC growth. With the right support and resources, PLCs can become a cornerstone of the professional development framework in Saudi schools, offering a collaborative and reflective approach to teaching and learning (Balogun et al., 2023).

1.3   Problem Statement

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative seeks to modernize and transform its educational system, with a particular emphasis on improving the quality of preschool education. This ambitious initiative has led to substantial investments in the education sector Saudi Arabia allocates 8.8% of its GDP to education, nearly double the global average. Despite these investments, critical challenges remain that hinder the realization of these educational goals, particularly in the preschool sector. These challenges include deficiencies in instructional leadership, low levels of teacher self-efficacy, insufficient integration of workplace spirituality, and underdeveloped PLCs. These issues significantly impact the quality of teaching and learning in preschool settings, presenting barriers to achieving the educational standards outlined in Vision 2030.

One of the primary issues is the lack of effective instructional leadership in Saudi preschools. Instructional leadership plays a vital role in shaping educational environments, supporting teachers, and fostering collaboration. Research has shown that well-trained instructional leaders can enhance teachers' instructional practices and professional growth (Karakose, 2024). However, in Saudi Arabia, only 42% of preschool leaders have received formal training in instructional leadership (Ministry of Education, 2024). This gap in training and professional preparation has led to

inconsistent leadership practices, leaving teachers without the necessary support and guidance to improve their teaching practices and student outcomes.

In addition to the challenges related to instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy is a crucial factor influencing teaching quality and student outcomes. Teachers' belief in their ability to positively impact student learning is essential for motivation, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness. In Saudi preschools, however, a significant proportion of preschool teachers report low self-efficacy due to insufficient professional development and lack of support structures (OECD, 2024). Approximately 55% of preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia report low self-efficacy, which directly influences their teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction (Alghamdi & Li, 2019). This lack of confidence contributes to poor teaching quality and impedes the implementation of modern pedagogical approaches that are essential for addressing the diverse needs of young learners in Saudi preschools.

Another critical issue is the insufficient integration of WS in the preschool context. Workplace spirituality, defined as a sense of meaning, purpose, and connectedness in the work environment, has been shown to positively affect teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Pawar, 2020). In Saudi Arabia's culturally rich and Islamic context, aligning teachers' personal spiritual values with organizational values is crucial for their professional satisfaction and motivation. However, research indicates that 60% of preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia feel unsupported in their spiritual needs, diminishing their sense of purpose and impacting their job satisfaction (Islamic Studies Research Center, 2024). This lack of workplace spirituality contributes to teacher burnout, high turnover rates, and reduced organizational commitment, ultimately affecting the quality of teaching and learning in preschool settings.

Furthermore, the underdevelopment of PLCs in Saudi preschools remains a significant concern. PLCs are a key strategy for fostering teacher collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous professional development (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). However, only 35% of preschools in Saudi Arabia have structured and active PLCs (Saudi Educational Research Association, 2024). Without opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share teaching strategies, and engage in professional development, their growth is hindered, and the quality of teaching suffers. The lack of formal PLCs limits teachers' ability to improve their practices, share expertise, and support one another in the face of challenges.

Despite the recognition of these issues, research exploring how these factorssuch as instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, workplace spirituality, and PLCs interact within the context of preschool education is limited. Previous studies have explored the individual roles of these factors in enhancing teacher self-efficacy, but few have examined how they work synergistically to improve preschool education. While instructional leadership has been shown to improve teacher self-efficacy (Karakose, 2024), research exploring how PLCs moderate the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy in preschool settings is scarce (Liu et al., 2020). The unique needs of preschool teachers, especially in engaging young children, underscore the importance of understanding how PLCs can enhance the impact of instructional leadership on teacher self-efficacy, motivation, and teaching quality.

Similarly, while workplace spirituality has been linked to improved teacher job satisfaction, motivation, and well-being (Zheng et al., 2019), limited research has focused on how workplace spirituality mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy in preschool settings. Most studies on workplace

spirituality have focused on higher education or broader organizational contexts, with insufficient attention given to its role in early childhood education. The role of workplace spirituality in fostering a supportive work environment and enhancing teacher self-efficacy in preschools remains underexplored. Given the importance of aligning teachers' spiritual values with their work environment, further research is needed to understand how workplace spirituality can influence teachers' professional identity and self-efficacy, particularly in culturally specific contexts like Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, despite the well-documented benefits of PLCs in promoting teacher collaboration and professional growth, the existing literature lacks research investigating the interplay between instructional leadership, PLCs, and workplace spirituality in the context of preschool education. Few studies have considered how PLCs can moderate the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy while also exploring how workplace spirituality mediates this relationship. This gap is especially significant in Saudi Arabia, where the preschool education system faces unique challenges in teacher development, leadership practices, and teacher retention.

These challenges are critical in the context of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 educational reforms, which aim to improve the quality of education at all levels, particularly early childhood education. Addressing gaps in teacher training, leadership, and professional development is crucial for successfully implementing Vision 2030. As the country works toward transforming its educational system, addressing the issues of instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, workplace spirituality, and PLC development is essential to ensure the long-term success of preschool education.

This research aims to fill the gaps in the current literature by exploring how instructional leadership, workplace spirituality, and PLCs influence teacher self-efficacyin Saudi Arabian preschools. Understanding the complex relationships between these factors will provide valuable insights into how to enhance preschool teachers' professional development, foster a supportive work environment, and improve the overall quality of education. By investigating how PLCs moderate the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy and how workplace spirituality mediates this relationship, this research will contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies to support preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia.

In conclusion, while each of these factors suach as instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, workplace spirituality, and PLCs has been studied individually, there is a critical need for research that examines how they interact within the context of preschool education in Saudi Arabia. Addressing the gaps in the current literature will provide valuable insights into how these factors collectively influence teacher development and the quality of preschool education. This research will contribute to the broader understanding of teacher development and organizational effectiveness in early childhood education, offering recommendations that can inform policy and practice, ultimately enhancing the quality of preschool education in Saudi Arabia and similar contexts.