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Headmasters' level of Instructional Leadership as Perceived by Music Teachers: Evidence from Primary Schools in Guangyuan, Sichuan Province

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Abstract

Instructional leadership has been widely recognized as essential for improving teaching quality, yet empirical evidence from western Sichuan and from non-core subjects such as music remains limited. This study aims to investigate the overall perception of primary school music teachers in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province, regarding the headmaster's level of instructional leadership, filling a gap in empirical evidence within non-core subjects and underdeveloped regions. The research utilized the validated Chinese version of the PIMRS scale, gathered 62 valid questionnaires through convenience sampling, and analyzed the headmaster's performance across four dimensions of instructional leadership using descriptive statistics. The findings indicate that the surveyed teachers generally believed the headmaster's instructional leadership was quite high, with the "securing support from within and outside the school" dimension scoring the highest, while the "fostering a positive learning culture" dimension received a lower rating. On a more specific level, the headmaster excelled in enhancing teacher relationships and fostering communication and collaboration, but their motivational behaviors towards students were perceived as weaker. This study offers a fresh perspective on understanding instructional leadership in rural western regions and for marginalized subjects, providing practical insights for improving headmaster training, optimizing resource allocation, and advancing school improvement efforts.

Keywords: Headmasters' Instructional Leadership, Primary Music Education, Non-Core Subjects, Teacher Perceptions

Introduction

Under the background of global education reform, the teaching leadership of school headmasters is increasingly regarded as a key factor, which can help us improve the quality of education and promote the professional growth of teachers. This kind of leadership not only refers to management ability, but also includes the ability to set learning direction, support teachers' progress, and create a positive school culture (Hallinger, 2011; Li, W., 2020).

Recent practical studies around the world have shown that strong teaching leadership can greatly improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Alanoglu, 2022), but also indirectly improve students' learning achievement (Zdemir, Ahin,&ZTü rk, 2020). Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the actual effect and characteristics of the headmaster's instructional leadership for us to understand the mechanism of school improvement.

In recent years, although the basic education in our country has always emphasized the core role of headmasters in teaching leadership, the actual work in schools is not good enough. Some headmasters pay more attention to administrative management and student safety than curriculum development, classroom teaching guidance, feedback system and teachers' professional support (Zhang Xiaoqiang, 2021;; Aierken, 2023). Especially when implementing the policies of "Education Modernization 2035" and "opinions on deepening the reform of teacher team development in primary and secondary schools". Some headmasters failed to turn the policy requirements into clear teaching objectives and feasible plans of the school, resulting in unclear teaching objectives, a mere formality in attending lectures and evaluating classes, and scattered and incoherent school-based teaching and research (Wang, Y., 2018). Moreover, headmasters are often perfunctory in integrating resources, creating a research atmosphere and supporting classroom improvement, or just to cope with inspections, which cannot meet the requirements of the new curriculum reform for teaching innovation and improving the quality of education (Huang, 2020). These problems show that the quality and depth of headmasters' instructional leadership need to be strengthened, especially in the four aspects of "goal setting, teaching guidance, professional support and cultural cultivation".

For years, Chinese schools have been playing second fiddle to exam-centered assessment frameworks and policy-mandated accountability measures, which have systematically pushed arts and aesthetic education to the back burner. With the clock running short on class time, resources stretched thin, and institutional backing virtually nonexistent, this disconnect between policy and practice has created an uneven playing field for subject development—leaving music programs out in the cold compared to their core academic counterparts (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2020). In the actual educational work, the school's teaching leaders often give priority to the main subjects such as Chinese and mathematics, which makes the music class develop poorly in terms of curriculum status, resource support, teacher growth and classroom improvement (Ni, 2021; Wang & Yang, 2018). It is found that under the condition of tight resources, school administrators often think that music education is a dispensable supplement, which leads to the fact that headmasters rarely participate in it through professional guidance, lectures, interdisciplinary cooperation and community interaction between home and school-all these factors hinder the balanced development of courses and the all-round growth of students (Wu, 2021). This is especially obvious in rural primary schools. Because of limited funds and neglect in management, music education often lacks necessary teaching materials, collective teaching and research time and integration into campus culture (Zhao, & Dang, 2018). Therefore, there is a gap in the way headmasters lead art education, which shows that there are still shortcomings in treating different disciplines fairly, providing targeted teaching support and conducting various curriculum leadership. Therefore, we urgently need to strengthen support for these vulnerable subjects, and reform the leadership style and school management framework to ensure the fairness of basic education and achieve comprehensive educational goals.

In line with the overall research design, this study takes primary schools in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province as the research setting. It aims to quantitatively analyze the overall level and dimensional characteristics of headmasters' instructional leadership. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the question: What is the level of headmaster's instructional leadership perceived by primary music teachers in Guangyuan city, Sichuan province? Grounded in Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership model, this study employs the headmaster Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to collect data. Descriptive statistical methods are used to present the results:

a) To determine the level of headmaster's instructional leadership perceived by primary music teachers in Guangyuan city, Sichuan province.

Literature Review

Theoretical framework

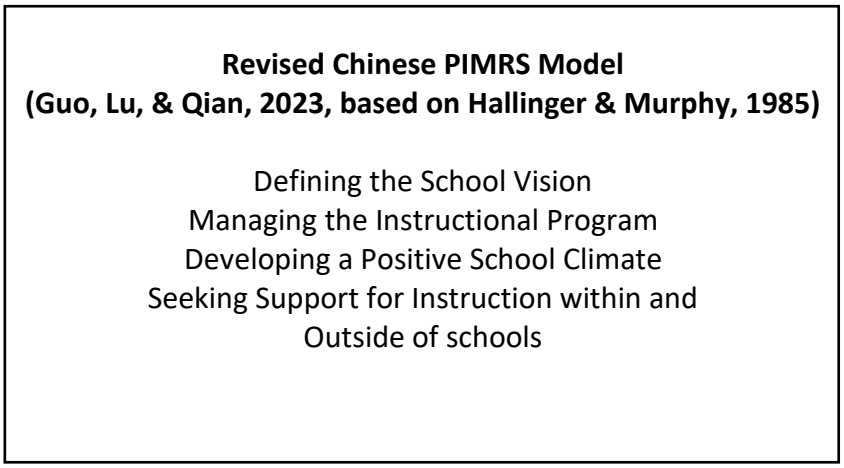

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework

This quantitative research is based on the theoretical framework of headmasters' instructional leadership proposed by Hallinger and Murphy(1985). Also this survey adopted a model called "Revised Chinese PIMRS Model", which was specially adjusted by Guo, Lu and Qian(2023) for the education situation in China, and it has four dimensions. This new model retains the core of the original PIMRS, but it can more accurately reflect the leadership style of headmasters in basic education in China. It divides the headmaster's instructional leadership into four aspects: defining the school vision, managing the instructional program, developing a positive school climate, and seeking support for instruction within and outside of schools. This model emphasizes how headmasters can use their various leadership behaviors-by setting school direction, improving teaching management, promoting teachers' cooperation and cultivating a culture of learning-to indirectly help teachers teach better and students learn better (Guo, Lu, & Qian, 2023; Hallinger, 2011; Li, W., 2020).

Definition and Development of Instructional Leadership

Since its introduction by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in the mid-1980s, instructional leadership has been a hot topic in the educational leadership field. Early studies primarily examined how headmasters could indirectly boost student performance by defining their school's mission, overseeing academic programs, and cultivating a positive learning environment. In more recent research, Hallinger (2011) expanded this concept, describing instructional leadership as an indirect leadership approach that promotes educational

improvement through teacher development, with the main goal of "influencing students through teachers." Harris et al. (2017) also highlighted that effective instructional leadership isn't about bureaucratic control but rather about creating a shared vision, offering instructional feedback, and fostering teacher collaboration. As schools face greater accountability and teachers become more specialized, the study of instructional leadership has gradually shifted from structural and administrative perspectives to behavioral and cultural ones (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Alanoglu, 2022). Consequently, the headmaster's role has evolved from being a "instructional supervisor" to an "instructional supporter."

In the realm of model evolution, Hallinger's three-dimensional framework is still widely embraced across the globe. However, scholars have continuously broadened its theoretical scope to address the intricate nature of educational environments. For instance, Ismail and colleagues (2018) advocate for integrating "teacher professional development support" and "school culture creation" into the new dimension of instructional leadership, reflecting the multifaceted nature of modern school leadership. Within the Chinese context, Guo, Lu, and Qian (2024) have adapted the Hallinger model by merging Li's (2015) conceptual framework derived from in-depth interviews with Chinese school headmasters, thus creating a localized version of the PIMRS model with four dimensions. This includes the newly added "seeking teaching support both inside and outside the school" dimension, which captures the cultural characteristics of Chinese headmaster leadership practices. Empirical research also demonstrates (Chen & Li, 2023) that through organizing teaching workshops and classroom observations, headmasters can significantly boost teachers' confidence and innovative teaching abilities, signaling a shift in instructional leadership from "management and supervision" to "empowerment and support."

Global and Domestic Trends in Previous Studies

From a global perspective, there are three main directions for the research on instructional leadership. The first kind of research focuses on school performance and teacher effectiveness: Cansoy and Parlar(2018) found that the headmaster's teaching leadership has a great relationship with the teacher's self-efficacy and students' performance when studying Turkish school. Özdemir, Şahin and ZTü rk (2020) later made a multi-level regression study, which further pointed out that the headmaster's behavior in "teaching project management" and "creating learning environment" can best predict the teacher's work effectiveness. The second category is the research centered on culture and environment: Alanoglu's (2022) transnational comprehensive analysis shows that the effect of teaching leadership is different in different educational and cultural backgrounds. Schools in East Asian countries usually pay more attention to administrative management and system establishment, while schools in western countries pay more attention to teachers' autonomy and joint decision-making. The third category is about distributed leadership and teamwork: in recent years, scholars have begun to explore how headmasters can promote cooperative learning among teachers through distributed leadership mode, thus indirectly improving teaching quality (Hao & Huang, 2023).

In our research field in China, the research on teaching leadership has also shifted from a "management" focus to a "development" focus. The early investigation mainly focused on the administrative work of school headmasters (Li, 2020), but the current research is to observe how headmasters affect curriculum reform, teacher development and school culture

cultivation (Ni, 2021). According to Zheng and Gong (2018), the teaching leadership of a headmaster is not only to do administrative work, but also to provide guidance and professional support for teachers in specific subjects. The policy progress related to aesthetic education has also made scholars more interested in teaching leadership in non-core courses such as music and art (Ni, 2021). Scholars in China have done a lot of empirical research on the instructional leadership of headmasters in the basic education stage. Using the data of TALIS 2018, Li, Wang, and Zhao (2020) found that headmasters in China scored high on "setting teaching vision", but were relatively weak on "giving teachers feedback and classroom guidance". Chen and Li (2023) further pointed out that headmasters who continue to invest in teacher training and teaching feedback can significantly improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. However, most of these studies are aimed at a wider group of teachers, ignoring the detailed analysis of teachers in non-core subjects.

Location

At the regional level, the uneven distribution of basic education resources has always been a long-standing problem in Sichuan Province. Zhao, H. G. and Dang, D. P. (2018) found that in a fifth-tier city like Guangyuan, school headmasters are limited by human and financial resources, which leads to the slow progress of curriculum innovation and teacher development mechanism. The gap between urban and rural areas has significantly affected the effect of teaching leadership. Urban schools with rich resources are more likely to cultivate a positive learning culture, while headmasters in underdeveloped areas tend to focus more on administrative affairs (Zhao & Dang, 2018). They also confirmed that the scores of local school headmasters in the two dimensions of "professional guidance" and "cultural cultivation" are far below the national average. In a word, Sichuan's teaching leadership practice shows the characteristics of regional imbalance, insufficient teacher support and weak cultural leadership.

Gaps

A review of both domestic and international literature reveals that while instructional leadership has been extensively examined, three significant gaps remain in the scholarly conversation. First and foremost, there is a dearth of quantitative evidence at the regional level. The bulk of research has zeroed in on coastal cities or relied on large-sample datasets, largely neglecting an in-depth investigation into the instructional leadership of school headmasters in western regions—particularly in areas like Sichuan where educational resources are comparatively scarce (Luo, 2020). Secondly, research demonstrating disciplinary sensitivity is conspicuously absent. Existing studies predominantly draw from general teacher populations, with scant attention paid to the perspectives of teachers in non-core subjects such as music and art (Ni, 2021). Finally, the methodological approaches employed in empirical research tend to be one-dimensional. Most investigations rely either on questionnaire-based correlation analysis or qualitative interviews, falling short of incorporating systematic dimensional analysis and statistical examination of regional disparities (Aierken, 2023; Hao & Huang, 2023).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design, which falls under the category of descriptive survey research. The primary aim was to examine the perceptions of primary

school music teachers in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province, regarding the level of their headmasters' instructional leadership. The research utilized a structured, closed-ended questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. The surveys were scored using a Likert scale of five points (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The rationale for using quantitative methods is that they allow for the statistical representation of teachers' overall perceptions and the analysis of relationships across different dimensions, thereby providing empirical support for educational leadership theory and school management practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By objectively measuring the teachers' perceptions, the study can uncover the actual performance and distribution characteristics of the headmasters' instructional leadership behaviors.

Participants

The study focused on active primary school music teachers in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province, with a total of 62 completed questionnaires gathered. These responses were sourced from a variety of county and urban primary schools across the city, including Laozhou Experimental Primary School, Qiangtian First Primary School, Wangcang County Primary School, Jingge Experimental Primary School, Qingchuan County Primary School, and Cangxian County Primary School. The research employed a convenient sampling approach, primarily choosing subjects based on their ease of access and willingness to engage in the study (Alvi, 2016). This method is particularly suited for investigations involving specific groups, especially when the sample size is limited, as was the case with the music teachers. All participants were eager to be a part of the research, and prior to distributing the questionnaires, the researchers clearly communicated the study's objectives, the intended use of data, and the headmasters of confidentiality. This was to ensure that informed consent was obtained, as well as to adhere to the headmasters of anonymity and confidentiality, in keeping with ethical standards for educational research.

Research Instrument

This research utilized the Chinese version of the headmaster Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) as the sole instrument to gauge elementary school teachers' perceptions of their headmasters' instructional leadership capabilities. Originally developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), this tool comprises three key dimensions: "defining school mission," "managing instructional programs," and "cultivating a learning environment." Subsequently, scholars including Guo Wei, Lu Jiafang, and Qian Haiyan adapted and validated the scale within China's educational context, resulting in the Chinese PIMRS (Guo, Lu, & Qian, 2020).

Table 1.1
Dimensions and Items of headmasters' Instructional Leadership

Dimensions	**No. of Items**
Defining the School Mission	6
Managing the Instructional Program	7
Developing the School Learning Climate	12
Seeking Support for Instruction within and Outside of schools	6

The revised version contains 31 items distributed across four dimensions: defining school mission, managing instructional programs, cultivating a learning environment, and seeking

internal and external instructional support. While the first three dimensions maintain the original framework, the fourth dimension was newly incorporated to align with China's school management realities, reflecting headmasters' leadership behaviors in securing external resources, fostering teacher collaboration, and promoting school-based development. The scale employs a five-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), with teachers providing ratings based on their personal observations and experiences. Grounded in this Chinese version, the study developed a questionnaire that underwent minor wording adjustments by education management experts to better suit the elementary education context. The survey was administered online via the "Questionnaire Star" platform to elementary music teachers in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province, to examine their perceptions of headmasters' instructional leadership both overall and across specific dimensions.

Table 1.2
Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of Dimensions of headmasters' Instructional Leadership

Dimensions of headmasters' Instructional Leadership	Cronbach's Alpha
Defining the School Mission	0.881
Managing the Instructional Program	0.872
Developing the School Learning Climate	0.922
Seeking Support for Instruction within and Outside of schools	0.909
Total	0.966

Table 1.2 shows the internal consistency reliability index (Cronbach's Alpha) of headmasters' teaching leadership. All Cronbach's Alpha values are between 0.872 and 0.922, indicating that each part has strong internal reliability. Specifically, the reliability of Defining the School Mission is 0.881, managing the instructional program is 0.872, developing the school learning climate is 0.922, and seeking support for instruction both internally and externally reaches 0.909. The total reliability score of the whole teaching leadership scale is 0.966, which exceeds the standard reference value of 0.70 (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), which proves that the measurement tools used in this study have excellent internal consistency and reliability.

The structure validity of the Chinese version of PIMRS was statistically validated via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The researchers employed Mplus 7 software to compare various models, revealing that the four-dimension, 31-item version of the Chinese PIMRS model fit significantly better than the original three-dimension version. Among the specific fit indices, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was consistently above 0.90, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was below 0.08, suggesting a good fit to the model, in line with international standards (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, the Chinese version of the scale demonstrated high structural stability and explanatory power across both teacher and headmaster samples, with an R^2 value of .313, thereby solidifying its robust structure validity (Guo, Lu, & Qian, 2020).

Data Collection Procedure

This study's data collection process was wrapped up within two weeks, utilizing a clear timeline and a step-by-step approach to ensure the questionnaire's systematic and effective nature. Initially, during the preparation and communication phase on May 16th and 17th, the

researchers connected with school administrators to finalize the sample subjects and informed the teachers about the study's objectives, the requirements for completing the survey, as well as the headmasters of anonymity and confidentiality. They also double-checked the questionnaire tools to guarantee a smooth administration. Moving forward, from May 19th to 23rd, the questionnaire distribution phase commenced. Besides encouraging on-site completion by teachers to boost response rates, the researchers also crafted an electronic survey on the "Questionnaire Star" platform and disseminated the survey links through various channels, including teacher WeChat and QQ groups, educational system contacts, and relevant professional communities. The first page of the questionnaire clearly outlined the study's instructions, data confidentiality requirements, and submission time limits. Logic for responses and anti-duplicate submission mechanisms were also implemented to ensure the authenticity and validity of the data. Subsequently, from May 24th to 27th, the online collection and preliminary screening took place, with the elimination of obviously incomplete or invalid questionnaires and the systematic numbering and data entry of the valid samples. Finally, from May 28th to 30th, data cleaning and preliminary processing were conducted, which included verifying data integrity, naming variables, and summarizing dimension scores to facilitate subsequent statistical analysis. Overall, the study achieved its objectives by conducting an online, anonymous survey in a non-interfering natural environment, thereby ensuring the authenticity of the teachers' responses and enhancing the quality and reliability of the data and findings.

Data Analysis

This study initially employed descriptive statistical techniques to process the collected data, calculating key metrics such as mean scores, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values to paint a comprehensive picture of the overall state of headmasters' instructional leadership and how it breaks down across different dimensions. Descriptive statistics prove invaluable for condensing extensive quantitative information into clearer data structures, making them ideal for illustrating music teachers' general perceptions of their headmasters' instructional leadership capabilities (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Table 1.3
Research Question and Analytical Approaches

	Research Questions	**Criterion**	**Data Analysis Method**
RQ	What is the level of headmaster's instructional leadership perceived by primary music teachers in Guangyuan city, Sichuan province?	Mean and standard deviation of the instructional leadership dimensions	Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum)

As indicated in Tables 1.3 and 1.4, the analysis focused primarily on determining where instructional leadership scores fell across five distinct categories—from "very low" to "very high"—by examining the mean and standard deviation for each dimension. This approach enabled a thorough evaluation of how primary school music teachers in Guangyuan City perceive their headmasters' instructional leadership behaviors.

Table 1.4
Likert Scale

Variable	Mean Score	Level	Interpretation
headmasters' Instructional Leadership (PIMRS)	1.000 – 1.800	Very Low	Almost never
	1.801 – 2.600	Low	Rarely
	2.601 – 3.400	Moderate	Sometimes
	3.401 – 4.200	High	Often
	4.201 – 5.000	Very High	Almost always

Moreover, to vividly illustrate the headmaster's leadership in teaching through specific behavioral items, this study employs the frequency and percentage analysis feature of SPSS to statistically analyze the distribution of each question in the PIMRS scale across the five levels from "never occur" to "always occur" (refer to Appendix A). By examining the proportion of responses in the higher categories of "always occur" and "frequently occur," we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the headmaster's specific performance in various teaching leadership behaviors, thereby complementing the overall trends indicated by the mean and standard deviation.

Findings

Research Question : What is the level of headmasters' instructional leadership as perceived by music teachers?

This study then delved into descriptive statistics to calculate the means and standard deviations across the four dimensions of headmaster instructional leadership. This was done to give a comprehensive look at the overall distribution. As indicated by the SPSS output, Table 1.5 provides a snapshot of the statistical indices for "defining the school mission," "managing instructional programs," "fostering a school learning climate," and "securing in-school and out-of-school teaching support." It also includes the overall mean, offering a holistic overview of the perceived level of instructional leadership among the surveyed music teachers.

Table 1.5
Descriptive Statistics of headmasters' instructional Leadership

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Defining the School Mission	3.806	0.797	High
Managing the Instructional Program	3.729	0.746	High
Developing the School Learning Climate	3.589	0.761	High
Seeking Support for Instruction within and Outside of schools	3.882	0.767	High
Overall	3.751	0.705	High

On average, the mean scores across the four dimensions were as follows: "Defining the School's Mission" clocked in at 3.806, "Managing Teaching Projects" came in at 3.729, "Fostering a School Learning Environment" stood at 3.589, and "Seeking In-School and External Teaching Support" topped out at 3.882. The overall mean score was 3.751. Regarding standard deviations, the values ranged from 0.746 to 0.797 across the dimensions, with a total standard deviation of 0.705. These descriptive statistics paint a picture of the distribution of ratings among the four dimensions, illustrating the fundamental numerical structure and overall pattern of the scale's data.

Discussion

According to the statistical findings of this research, elementary school music teachers surveyed generally held a positive view of their headmasters' instructional leadership. All four dimensions received relatively high average scores, indicating that educators widely recognize their headmasters' effectiveness in areas such as academic management, communication of school vision, fostering a positive teaching environment, and resource acquisition. The standard deviation values across these dimensions were remarkably similar, suggesting that teacher evaluations showed limited variation and revealed a degree of consensus in their perceptions. The composite score further demonstrates that instructional leadership practices in the surveyed institutions demonstrate considerable stability, providing quantitative data that sheds light on the actual experiences of music educators in Guangyuan's elementary schools. In line with prior research, Chinese elementary educators generally hold favorable views of their school leaders, particularly when assessing capabilities in articulating educational objectives and providing pedagogical assistance (Zheng, 2019; Han, 2020).

Examining the frequency percentage distribution outlined in Appendix A allows for a deeper insight into the varying manifestations of headmaster leadership in specific behaviors. The findings reveal that "fostering teacher relationships" (Question 27) ranks highest in the high-frequency category ("almost always" or "often"), with "almost always" accounting for a substantial 29.0%. This indicates that the actions related to building teacher relationships in day-to-day school management are the most noticeable and widely recognized. This trend aligns with recent research indicating that the headmaster's actions in areas such as organizational coordination, promoting teacher collaboration, and fostering a positive culture are more observable by teachers and more likely to yield a shared perception (Hallinger, 2018; Liu & Hallinger, 2020). In the context of Chinese schools, as the headmaster's role shifts from administrative control to a supportive leadership model, enhancing teacher collaboration and maintaining team stability have become critical to school development. Consequently, such behaviors tend to be more visibly demonstrated. (Guo, Lu, & Qian, 2023).

In contrast, the percentage of headmasters who "receive students in their office and commend their outstanding performance or progress" (Item 24) is the highest among "almost never" at 14.5%. This infrequent practice might be linked to the headmaster's primary focus on teacher management, curriculum planning, and administrative coordination, which leaves less room for them to be directly involved in student recognition activities. Existing research suggests that when it comes to instructional leadership, headmasters are more often seen engaging in "teacher-facing" actions rather than "student-facing" personalized interactions, which are typically handled by class teachers or subject teachers in the day-to-day operations of schools (Li, Wang, & Zhao, 2020; Chen & Li, 2023). As a result, it's not common for teachers to observe the headmaster providing individual praise to students, which contributes to the relatively low frequency of this behavior.

The discrepancy between these two actions highlights a notable imbalance in the headmaster's approach to "teacher support" versus "direct student motivation." This imbalance underscores the varying degrees of visibility associated with different leadership behaviors within the school setting. Teachers tend to be more aware of the supportive, communicative, and collaborative environment that pertains to them, which is reflected in

higher scores for these behaviors. Conversely, the individual motivational actions aimed at students, which occur less frequently, are carried out by other teachers, and are not as directly observable, are given lower ratings. This finding aligns with international research on the "visibility gap" in leadership behaviors, suggesting that teachers primarily perceive the headmaster's actions through visible and accessible management activities (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). On the whole, these disparities further indicate that while the headmaster has a strong presence in shaping the organization and culture, their direct involvement in student development remains relatively limited.

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the overall perception of school headmasters' instructional leadership by primary school music teachers in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province. Utilizing the revised Chinese version of the PIMRS scale and descriptive statistics, the research objectives were successfully met. The findings indicate that the headmaster scored highly across four dimensions: defining the school vision, managing instructional projects, fostering a school learning environment, and seeking support from within and outside the school. This suggests that the surveyed teachers generally hold a positive view of the headmaster's role in instructional leadership and support.

This study has made several critical advancements in the domain of educational leadership and the wider social sciences landscape. To start with, it delves into a rare quantitative exploration of primary instructional leadership in an underdeveloped part of western China, broadening the empirical base of research which has typically zeroed in on wealthier eastern provinces. Moreover, by focusing on primary school music teachers, a demographic that's often underrepresented in leadership studies, the research presents a subject-specific perspective, illuminating the disparity in the leadership experience across different academic disciplines. Finally, the application of the revised Chinese PIMRS model has been empirically demonstrated, reinforcing its suitability in schools with fewer resources, and bolstering the evidence for its structural significance within the current educational landscape in China. Taken together, these insights underscore the significance of this study in tackling regional disparities, subject neglect, and the localization of models within the social sciences community.

Furthermore, a frequency analysis of specific projects reveals that the headmaster is more visible in areas like interpersonal coordination and promoting teacher collaboration, while the frequency of individualized motivational behaviors with students is lower. This discrepancy highlights the varied focus of different teaching leadership behaviors in daily school operations. Overall, this study provides new quantitative evidence for understanding the perspective of primary school music teachers in underdeveloped regions of our country regarding instructional leadership and adds valuable regional research data to the field of art education. Theoretical significance lies in further validating the applicability of the localized model of instructional leadership within the Chinese educational context, while practical significance is evident in its potential to inform local educational departments about improving headmaster training programs, strengthening teacher support policies, and optimizing school management practices.

However, the study does have limitations—a relatively small sample size, focus on music teachers only, a single data source, and a lack of longitudinal tracking—all of which restrict the generalizability and causal explanatory power of the conclusions. Future research should expand the sample to include teachers from various disciplines and regions, and utilize structural equation models, mixed methods, or long-term tracking designs to more comprehensively illustrate the dynamic influence mechanisms of headmaster instructional leadership behaviors. In summary, this study underscores the crucial role of headmaster instructional leadership in driving teacher professional development and school improvement in regions with limited educational resources, and its continuous enhancement is vital for promoting educational equity and improving the quality of basic education.

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