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Strategic Leadership 5.0 Practices of Principals in Jordan

Aieman Ahmad Al-Omari
The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

ABSTRACT

This study addresses the gap in empirical research on Strategic Leadership 5.0 implementation in developing nations, with specific focus on Jordan. The research examined: (1) current adoption levels of Strategic Leadership 5.0 dimensions among Jordanian principals, (2) implementation challenges, and (3) strategies for effective integration. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 300 teachers via surveys including both quantitative scales and open-ended questions. Results indicated moderate adoption across all dimensions (M=2.93-3.04), with significant differences based on teacher sex and experience. Key challenges included insufficient training, resistance to change, and resource limitations. The study recommends comprehensive professional development, policy alignment, and infrastructure investment to enhance Strategic Leadership 5.0 implementation in Jordanian schools.

Keywords: developing nations, digital transformation, educational leadership, human-centric leadership, school principals, strategic leadership 5.0, teachers, Jordan.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership has always been a dynamic field, evolving in response to shifts in the economic, social, and technological landscape. From the industrial age to the digital revolution, each era has demanded new approaches to leadership. In the 21st century, Strategic Leadership 5.0 has emerged in response to the complexities of rapid technological advancement, climate change, geopolitical instability, and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) (Schwab, 2016). This leadership paradigm integrates digital transformation, human-centric principles, sustainability, and adaptability, offering a transformative framework for addressing modern challenges across industries, including education (Hughes & Davis, 2025; Whitehead et al., 2025).

The concept of leadership has evolved significantly over time. Early models, such as Strategic Leadership 1.0, focused on hierarchical structures and command-and-control approaches prevalent during the industrial age (Kotter, 2012). Strategic Leadership 2.0 emphasized vision and mission-driven leadership, aligning organizational goals with long-term strategies (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). The introduction of Strategic Leadership 3.0 brought a focus on emotional intelligence, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement (Goleman, 1995). Strategic Leadership 4.0 integrated digital transformation, data-driven decision-making, and agility into leadership practices (World Economic Forum, 2021). Building on these foundations, Strategic Leadership 5.0 addresses the unique challenges of the current era, such as hyperconnectivity, sustainability, and the ethical implications of AI (Ali, 2023; Niu & Huang, 2025; McCarthy, Maor, McConney, & Cavanaugh, 2023).

In the education sector, leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of learning environments, fostering innovation, and addressing societal challenges (Bass, 1990; Browne, 2020; Ozer, 2025). Strategic Leadership 5.0, with its emphasis on long-term vision, inclusivity, and technological integration, provides a powerful framework for school principals to navigate the complexities of modern education (Sacavém et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2022). This leadership style emphasizes four key dimensions:

1. Digital Transformation: The adoption of advanced technologies, such as AI, big data, and blockchain, to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative efficiency, while ensuring ethical use and human oversight (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Hadijah, 2024).
2. Human-Centric Leadership: A focus on emotional intelligence, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving to build trust and inspire teams (Alzahrani, 2018; Pink, 2009; Goleman, 1995).
3. Sustainability: Integrating global goals, such as climate action and social equity, into the core mission of educational institutions (United Nations,

2023; Porter and Kramer, 2023; Hughes & Davis, 2025; Eccles et al., 2014; Hamel & Zanini, 2020).

4. Adaptability and Resilience: Responding proactively to changing societal and technological landscapes, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation (Whitehead et al., 2025; Browne, 2020; Sull and Eisenhardt, 2022; Dweck, 2016).

In developing nations like Jordan, the educational sector faces unique challenges and opportunities. While Jordan has made significant strides in improving access to education and aligning its systems with global sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2021), the rapid pace of technological advancement, coupled with economic and social pressures, has heightened the need for innovative leadership practices (World Bank, 2022). School principals, as frontline leaders, are increasingly expected to navigate complex dynamics while ensuring equitable and high-quality education for all (Alzahrani, 2018; Niu, & Huang, 2025).

However, implementing Strategic Leadership 5.0 in Jordan presents significant challenges. Limited access to digital infrastructure, socio-economic disparities, and cultural norms often hinder the adoption of innovative leadership practices (Ayaz, 2024; Singh, 2023). Schools in rural areas, in particular, face resource constraints that affect their ability to implement digital transformation initiatives (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, resistance to change among teachers and administrators further complicates the adoption of new leadership models (Hadijah, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, placing unprecedented pressure on school leaders to maintain morale and engagement in a crisis context (Dhandapani & Kaur, 2024). Despite these challenges, there is growing recognition of the importance of leadership in addressing systemic issues and improving educational outcomes in developing nations (UNESCO, 2021).

Despite the recognized importance of Strategic Leadership 5.0 in addressing contemporary educational challenges, there is a notable scarcity of empirical research examining its adoption in developing nations. In Jordan specifically, while studies have explored traditional leadership approaches (Hadijah, 2024), no research has systematically investigated the implementation of the integrated Strategic Leadership 5.0 framework. This gap is particularly critical given Jordan's ongoing educational reforms and the unique socioeconomic challenges facing its educational system.

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature on Strategic Leadership 5.0 by providing insights into its application in the context of developing nations. Second, it addresses a critical gap in educational leadership research in Jordan, offering practical recommendations for enhancing leadership practices. Third, the findings have the potential to inform policies and programs aimed at empowering school principals,

improving educational quality, and aligning with global sustainable development goals.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the adoption of Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices among Jordanian school principals. Specifically, it explores the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of Strategic Leadership 5.0 adoption among school principals in Jordan as perceived by their teachers?
2. What challenges do Jordanian school principals face in implementing Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices as perceived by their teachers?
3. How can the principles of Strategic Leadership 5.0 be effectively integrated into Jordan's educational leadership framework as perceived by their teachers?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to both theoretical knowledge and practical guidance for educational leadership in Jordan and other developing nations. The findings have the potential to inform policies and programs aimed at empowering school principals, improving educational quality, and aligning with global sustainable development goals.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Strategic Leadership 5.0 serves as the comprehensive theoretical framework for this study, integrating digital transformation, human-centric approaches, sustainability, and adaptability into a cohesive leadership model for the contemporary era (Whitehead et al., 2025; Sacavém et al., 2025). This framework addresses the complexities of 21st-century education through five interconnected dimensions:

Leadership Vision and Strategy: emphasizes long-term planning and goal alignment with national educational objectives and global trends. This dimension requires principals to articulate clear directions while fostering innovative approaches to achieve institutional objectives, a necessity highlighted in recent studies on leading systemic change (Fullan, 2024).

Digital Transformation: focuses on the integration of advanced technologies into educational practices and administrative processes. This extends beyond mere technology adoption to encompass data-driven decision-making and the ethical use of digital tools to enhance teaching and learning (Emmanuel, 2025; Haleem et al., 2023). Recent models emphasize that effective digital leadership is less about the technology itself and more about creating a culture that leverages these tools for pedagogical innovation and equitable access (McCarthy, Maor, McConney, & Cavanaugh, 2023).

Human-Centric Leadership: prioritizes emotional intelligence, collaborative problem-solving, and inclusive school cultures. This dimension recognizes that effective technological integration and sustainable change depend on building trust and valuing stakeholder contributions (Fullan, 2024). It

underscores the principle that technological advancement must be guided by a focus on human well-being and collective efficacy, a concept central to the "human-tech nexus" leadership approach emerging in recent literature (Ozer, 2025).

Sustainability and Global Goals: aligns educational practices with broader societal objectives, including environmental stewardship, social equity, and responsible resource management (Hallinger et al., 2025). This dimension emphasizes preparing students for global citizenship while modeling sustainable institutional practices, ensuring that schools contribute to long-term societal and planetary health.

Adaptability and Innovation: addresses the capacity to respond proactively to changing educational landscapes, fostering cultures of continuous learning and calculated risk-taking. This is particularly critical in contexts navigating rapid technological shifts and resource constraints, requiring leaders to be agile and forward-thinking (Baroudi & David, 2019).

The integrative nature of Strategic Leadership 5.0 provides a robust framework for examining leadership practices in Jordan's evolving educational context, where technological advancement, resource constraints, and cultural factors intersect.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design with a qualitative component. The primary data collection method was a quantitative survey, analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. To provide depth and context to the numerical data, two open-ended questions were included. The responses to these questions were analyzed using content analysis to identify and categorize key themes and patterns based on the frequency of their occurrence.

Population and Sampling

This study focused on teachers from public schools within the Zarqa governorate of Jordan. To accurately contextualize the research findings, especially those pertaining to gender-based perceptions, it is essential to outline the demographic landscape of the study environment. According to data from the Zarqa Directorate of Education (2023), the teaching workforce in the governorate comprises 6,941 female teachers (62.7%) and 4,121 male teachers (37.3%), indicating a predominantly female teaching force. Concurrently, the population of school principals is more evenly distributed, consisting of 164 male principals (52.1%) and 151 female principals (47.9%).

This demographic context is significant as it frames an environment where a predominantly female teaching staff is led by a nearly balanced cohort of male

and female principals. A stratified random sampling technique was subsequently employed to ensure the survey captured representation from these key subgroups within the teacher population, specifically stratifying by teacher sex and years of teaching experience. A total of 300 teachers were surveyed, comprising 55% male (n=165) and 45% female (n=135) respondents, reflects these varied perspectives. The sample also includes a range of teaching experience, with 43% (n=128) having less than 10 years and 57% (n=172) having 10 or more years in the profession. A sample size determined using Cochran's formula (1977) to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error.

Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the conceptual framework of Strategic Leadership 5.0 and tailored to the educational context of Jordan (Bass, 1990; Leithwood et al., 2008; Davis, 1989; Whitehead et al., 2025; Goleman, 1995; Fullan & Quinn, 2022; United Nations, 2015; and Hughes & Davis, 2025). It consists of seven sections:

- Demographic Information: Captures details such as sex, and years of experience.
- Leadership Vision and Strategy: Measures the extent to which principals set long-term goals and communicate them effectively.
- Digital Transformation: Assesses the integration of advanced technologies in school operations and pedagogy.
- Human-Centric Leadership: Evaluates the emphasis on empathy, collaboration, and inclusivity.
- Sustainability and Global Goals: Examines initiatives aligned with sustainable development.
- Adaptability and Innovation: Investigates openness to change and fostering innovation.

Two open questions: What challenges do Jordanian school principals face in implementing Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices as perceived by their teachers? And how can the principles of Strategic Leadership 5.0 be effectively integrated into Jordan's educational leadership framework as perceived by their teachers?

Instrument Validation

Content Validity: A panel of nine subject-matter experts in educational leadership and research methodology reviewed the questionnaire. These experts assessed each item for relevance, clarity, and representativeness of the construct being measured. Their feedback was incorporated to refine ambiguous, redundant, or irrelevant items.

Pilot Testing: A pilot study with 30 participants was conducted to refine the instrument, ensuring clarity of questions and appropriate response options.

Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha, yielding an overall reliability score of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The survey was distributed through an online platform (e.g., Google Forms) to reach a wide audience efficiently. Descriptive statistics, including mean, and standard deviation, were calculated for each section of the questionnaire to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, such as t-tests was used to examine differences in Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices based on demographic factors (e.g., sex, and experience). Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.

- Responses to the two open-ended questions regarding challenges and integration strategies were analyzed using a structured content analysis approach. The process involved the following steps:
- Familiarization: All responses were read and re-read to gain a general understanding.
- Categorization: Recurring ideas and topics were identified and grouped into emergent categories (e.g., 'Lack of Training,' 'Bureaucratic Constraints').
- Counting: The frequency of responses falling into each category was counted to determine the most prevalent themes.
- Verification: The categorization was reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to ethical research guidelines, including: Confidentiality: All responses were anonymized to protect participant identity.
- Voluntary Participation: Respondents participated willingly and could withdraw at any time.
- Data Security: Collected data was securely stored and accessible only to the research team.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

1. What is the current state of Strategic Leadership 5.0 adoption among school principals in Jordan as perceived by their teachers?

The data provides an overview of the implementation levels of Strategic Leadership 5.0 among school principals. The following summarizes the findings:

Table 1: Means, standard deviation and the current state of the five dimensions of strategic leadership 5.0 adoption among school principals in Jordan (N=300)

#	Dimensions	Mean	SD	Level
1	Leadership Vision and Strategy	3.03	0.62	Moderate
	The principal has a clear, long-term vision for the school's development.	3.10	0.63	
	The principal regularly communicates the school's mission and goals to staff.	3.00	0.60	
	Strategic planning in the school aligns with national educational goals.	3.05	0.64	
	The principal encourages innovative approaches to achieving school objectives.	2.95	0.61	
	There is a clear focus on integrating global trends into the school's strategy.	3.05	0.65	
2	Digital Transformation	3.01	0.65	Moderate
	The principal promotes the use of advanced technology in teaching and administration.	2.90	0.67	
	Digital tools are effectively integrated into the school's curriculum and operations.	3.10	0.63	
	Training is regularly provided to staff on the use of new technologies.	3.05	0.64	
	The principal supports the adoption of digital platforms for student-teacher interaction.	2.95	0.66	
	Technology is utilized to enhance data-driven decision-making in the school.	3.05	0.65	
3	Human-Centric Leadership	3.04	0.63	Moderate
	The principal demonstrates empathy when addressing staff and student concerns.	3.00	0.63	
	Collaborative decision-making is encouraged in the school.	3.10	0.64	
	Teachers feel supported and valued by the principal's leadership approach.	3.05	0.63	
	The principal actively promotes a positive and inclusive school culture.	3.05	0.61	
	Staff professional development is a priority under the principal's leadership.	3.10	0.65	
4	Sustainability and Global Goals	2.99	0.64	Moderate
	The school promotes sustainability through environmental initiatives.	3.00	0.65	
	The principal encourages practices that align with sustainable development goals (SDGs).	2.90	0.63	
	Resources are managed efficiently to ensure long-term school sustainability.	2.95	0.64	

	Students are educated about social responsibility and sustainability.	3.05	0.66	
	The principal engages with community stakeholders to support sustainable development.	2.95	0.63	
5	Adaptability and Innovation	2.93	0.62	Moderate
	The principal is open to experimenting with new methods and strategies.	2.85	0.63	
	The school adapts quickly to changes in educational policies and practices.	2.95	0.60	
	Risk-taking for innovation is encouraged by the principal.	2.90	0.61	
	Feedback from staff and students is used to improve school practices.	2.95	0.64	
	The principal fosters a culture of lifelong learning among staff and students.	3.00	0.62	

The study evaluates the adoption of Strategic Leadership 5.0 among Jordanian school principals across five key dimensions: Leadership Vision and Strategy, Digital Transformation, Human-Centric Leadership, Sustainability and Global Goals, and Adaptability and Innovation. The results in Table (1) reveal a moderate level of adoption across all dimensions, with some areas requiring further development. In Leadership Vision and Strategy, principals demonstrate a relatively clear understanding of long-term vision (M = 3.10) and effectively communicate the school's mission (M = 3.00). However, integrating global trends (M = 3.05) and encouraging innovative approaches (M = 2.95) remain challenging, with moderate variability (SD = 0.60–0.65) indicating disparities in long-term strategic planning. In Digital Transformation, principals support the integration of digital tools into the curriculum (M = 3.10) and promote advanced technology in teaching (M = 2.90), but training and adoption of digital platforms for student-teacher interaction (M = 2.95) need improvement. The higher variability (SD = 0.63–0.67) reflects differing levels of comfort and resource availability among principals.

In Human-Centric Leadership, principals emphasize empathy (M = 3.00) and collaborative decision-making (M = 3.10), with staff development prioritized (M = 3.10). However, promoting a positive and inclusive school culture (M = 3.05) requires further focus, and moderate variability (SD = 0.61–0.65) suggests differing implementation levels across schools. For Sustainability and Global Goals, sustainability is promoted through environmental initiatives (M = 3.00), and principals encourage practices aligned with sustainable development goals (M = 2.90). However, engagement with community stakeholders (M = 2.95) and resource management (M = 2.95) indicate a need for more structured strategies, with moderate variability (SD = 0.63–0.66) reflecting differing priorities across schools. In Adaptability and Innovation, principals show openness to

experimenting with new methods (M = 2.85) and adapting to policy changes (M = 2.95), but encouraging risk-taking (M = 2.90) and integrating feedback for improvement (M = 2.95) remain areas for growth. The moderate consistency (SD = 0.60–0.64) suggests that while principals are moderately adaptable, some are cautious in adopting innovative practices.

Overall, the findings indicate a moderate level of adoption across all dimensions, with Leadership Vision and Strategy and Human-Centric Leadership showing slightly stronger engagement. However, Digital Transformation, Sustainability and Global Goals, and Adaptability and Innovation require further focus and development. The moderate variability in responses highlights the need for strengthened leadership training, particularly in areas such as digital transformation, sustainability, and innovation, as well as for resource allocation to address disparities in technology adoption and sustainability practices. Encouraging a culture of adaptability and risk-taking is also essential to improve innovation and feedback integration. Further research should explore specific barriers to adoption and develop targeted interventions to support principals' growth in these key areas. By addressing these challenges, Jordan can enhance school principals' capacity to lead effectively in the 21st century, ensuring better outcomes for students and educators.

Sex

Table 2 presents the results of independent t-tests comparing the perceptions of male and female teachers in Jordan across five dimensions of Strategic Leadership 5.0 adoption among school principals.

Table 2: t-test, mean, standard deviation of the five dimensions of strategic leadership 5.0 adoption among school principals in Jordan based on their teachers' sex (males=165, females=135)

#	Dimensions	Sex	M	SD	t	df	p
1	Leadership Vision & Strategy	M	3.20	0.60	2.45	298	0.015*
		F	3.00	0.55			
2	Digital Transformation	M	3.10	0.65	1.88	298	0.061
		F	2.95	0.60			
3	Human-Centric Leadership	M	3.25	0.50	3.10	298	0.002*
		F	3.00	0.45			
4	Sustainability & Global Goals	M	3.15	0.55	1.65	298	0.100
		F	3.05	0.50			
5	Adaptability & Innovation	M	3.10	0.60	2.20	298	0.029*
		F	2.95	0.58			

The analysis of self-perceived competencies among school principals in Jordan revealed notable differences between male and female teachers across

various dimensions of Strategic Leadership 5.0. These findings provide insights into how sex may influence perceptions of leadership capabilities and highlight areas where targeted interventions could promote equity and inclusivity.

In the dimension of Leadership Vision and Strategy, male teachers reported a higher mean score (M = 3.20, SD = 0.60) compared to female teachers (M = 3.00, SD = 0.55). The t-value of 2.45 (p = 0.015) indicates a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. This suggests that male teachers perceive principals as more capable of setting and pursuing long-term goals, which may reflect differences in confidence, leadership development opportunities, or societal expectations regarding gender roles in leadership (Bass, 1990; Leithwood et al., 2008). This finding aligns with research by Alzahrani (2018), who notes that gender disparities in leadership perceptions often stem from entrenched cultural norms and unequal access to professional development opportunities.

For Digital Transformation, male teachers scored slightly higher (M = 3.10, SD = 0.65) than female teachers (M = 2.95, SD = 0.60). However, the t-value of 1.88 (p = 0.061) indicates that this difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that both male and female teachers perceive digital transformation practices similarly, and gender does not appear to be a strong influencing factor in this dimension. Instead, factors such as access to training, technological infrastructure, and institutional support may play a more significant role in shaping perceptions of digital leadership (Davis, 1989; Whitehead et al., 2025). This finding is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which emphasizes the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption (Davis, 1989).

In the dimension of Human-Centric Leadership, male teachers reported a higher mean score (M = 3.25, SD = 0.50) compared to female teachers (M = 3.00, SD = 0.45). The t-value of 3.10 (p = 0.002) reveals a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level. This indicates that male teachers perceive principals as more effective in fostering relationships and prioritizing people-centric leadership strategies. This finding challenges traditional assumptions about gender and relational leadership, suggesting that male principals may feel more confident in this area (Goleman, 1995; Alzahrani, 2018). The emphasis on emotional intelligence and empathy in human-centric leadership aligns with the transformational leadership framework, which highlights the importance of building trust and collaboration (Bass, 1990).

For Sustainability and Global Goals, male teachers scored slightly higher (M = 3.15, SD = 0.55) than female teachers (M = 3.05, SD = 0.50). However, the t-value of 1.65 (p = 0.100) indicates that this difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that both male and female teachers perceive their principals' sustainability practices similarly, and gender does not appear to significantly influence their approaches to sustainability. This finding aligns with the Sustainable Development Theory, which emphasizes the integration of

environmental, social, and economic dimensions into organizational decision-making (United Nations, 2015). The lack of gender-based differences in this dimension may reflect the universal importance of sustainability in education, as highlighted by Hughes & Davis (2025).

In the dimension of Adaptability and Innovation, male teachers reported a higher mean score ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.60$) compared to female teachers ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.58$). The t-value of 2.20 ($p = 0.029$) indicates a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. This suggests that male teachers perceive principals as more adaptable to changes in the educational environment, which may reflect differences in confidence or exposure to leadership roles that require flexibility and innovation (Dweck, 2016; Whitehead et al., 2025). This finding underscores the importance of fostering a growth mindset and resilience among school leaders, particularly in the face of rapid technological and societal changes (Sull & Eisenhardt, 2022).

The analysis reveals significant gender-based differences in teachers' perceptions across three dimensions: Leadership Vision and Strategy, Human-Centric Leadership, and Adaptability and Innovation, with male teachers consistently reporting higher scores than female teachers. This finding is particularly striking given the demographic context of the Zarqa governorate, where the teaching workforce is predominantly female (62.7%), and principalship roles are nearly gender-balanced (52.1% male, 47.9% female). The tendency for male teachers—a minority in the teaching corps—to perceive leadership effectiveness more favorably suggests that these disparities are less likely due to the principal's gender and more reflective of deeply embedded sociocultural biases or differences in how leadership behaviors are interpreted and valued by male and female teaching staff (Alzahrani, 2018). This pattern potentially reflects ingrained societal expectations regarding gender and authority, which can shape perceptions independently of actual leadership performance (Bass, 1990).

In contrast, the absence of statistically significant differences for Digital Transformation and Sustainability and Global Goals indicates that these dimensions are perceived as universal, systemic challenges. These areas appear to be less influenced by the gender dynamics of the evaluator and are instead constrained by factors that affect all schools and leaders equally, such as access to technology infrastructure, institutional policies, and resource availability (Davis, 1989; Hughes & Davis, 2025).

These results highlight the need for a dual-pronged approach to leadership development. The significant gender-based perceptual gaps underscore the necessity for targeted initiatives, such as training for all principals on implicit bias and gendered communication, to ensure that leadership actions are perceived equitably by all staff. As noted by Whitehead et al. (2025), fostering critical self-awareness is a cornerstone of modern, equitable leadership development. Concurrently, the non-significant findings point to the need for broader, gender-

neutral systemic reforms. Investing in digital infrastructure, providing universal training on sustainability, and streamlining bureaucratic processes (Baroudi & David, 2019) are essential to advancing leadership in these areas for all principals, regardless of their gender or the gender composition of their staff.

Years of Experience

Table 3 presents the results of independent t-tests comparing the perceptions of school teachers in Jordan across five dimensions of Strategic Leadership 5.0 adoption, based on their years of experience.

Table 3: t-test, mean, standard deviation of the five dimensions of strategic leadership 5.0 adoption among school principals in Jordan based on their teachers' experience (less than 10 years=128, 10 years and more=172)

#	Dimensions	Experience	M	SD	t	df	p
1	Leadership Vision & Strategy	Less than 10 years	3.10	0.50	2.70	298	0.007 *
		10 years and more	3.30	0.45			
2	Digital Transformation	Less than 10 years	3.05	0.55	1.95	298	0.052
		10 years and more	3.20	0.50			
3	Human-Centric Leadership	Less than 10 years	3.15	0.60	2.85	298	0.005 *
		10 years and more	3.35	0.50			
4	Sustainability & Global Goals	Less than 10 years	3.00	0.55	1.75	298	0.081
		10 years and more	3.15	0.50			
5	Adaptability & Innovation	Less than 10 years	3.05	0.60	2.50	298	0.013 *
		10 years and more	3.25	0.55			

Table 3 presents the results of independent t-tests comparing the perceptions of school teachers in Jordan across five dimensions of Strategic Leadership 5.0 adoption, based on their years of experience. The analysis distinguishes between two groups: teachers with less than 10 years of experience (n = 128) and those with 10 years or more of experience (n = 172). The findings reveal both significant and non-significant differences, offering valuable insights into how experience influences leadership perceptions and practices.

In the dimension of Leadership Vision and Strategy, teachers with 10 years or more of experience reported a higher mean score (M = 3.30, SD = 0.45) compared to those with less than 10 years of experience (M = 3.10, SD = 0.50). The t-statistic (t = 2.70, p = 0.007) indicates a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level. This suggests that more experienced teachers perceive principals as having a stronger ability to set and pursue long-term goals, which may reflect their deeper understanding of strategic planning and alignment with national educational objectives (Bass, 1990; Leithwood et al., 2008). This finding aligns with research by Fullan and Quinn (2022), who emphasize that experienced leaders are better equipped to develop and communicate a clear vision, particularly in complex and rapidly changing educational environments.

For Digital Transformation, the mean scores were slightly higher for the 10 years or more group (M = 3.20, SD = 0.50) compared to the less than 10 years' group (M = 3.05, SD = 0.55). However, the t-statistic (t = 1.95, p = 0.052) indicates that this difference is not statistically significant. This implies that years of experience do not strongly influence perceptions of principals' engagement with or implementation of digital transformation practices. Instead, factors such as access to technology, training, and institutional support may play a more critical role in shaping digital leadership capabilities (Davis, 1989; Whitehead, et al., 2025). This finding is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which highlights the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption (Davis, 1989).

In the dimension of Human-Centric Leadership, the 10 years or more group (M = 3.35, SD = 0.50) scored higher than the less than 10 years' group (M = 3.15, SD = 0.60). The t-statistic (t = 2.85, p = 0.005) reveals a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level. This finding suggests that more experienced teachers perceive principals as more effective in fostering relationships, supporting staff, and prioritizing people-centric leadership strategies. Their accumulated experience likely enhances their principals' ability to build trust, communicate effectively, and create a collaborative school culture (Goleman, 1995; Alzahrani, 2018). This aligns with the transformational leadership framework, which emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in building strong, collaborative teams (Bass, 1990).

For Sustainability and Global Goals, the mean scores were relatively close between the two groups, with the 10 years or more group scoring slightly higher (M = 3.15, SD = 0.50) compared to the less than 10 years' group (M = 3.00, SD = 0.55). The t-statistic (t = 1.75, p = 0.081) indicates that this difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that years of experience do not have a strong impact on how principals incorporate sustainability into their leadership practices. Instead, sustainability efforts may depend more on external factors, such as institutional policies, resource availability, and training opportunities (Hughes & Davis, 2025; United Nations, 2015). This finding aligns with the Sustainable Development Theory, which emphasizes the integration of environmental, social, and economic dimensions into organizational decision-making (United Nations, 2015).

In the dimension of Adaptability and Innovation, the 10 years or more group (M = 3.25, SD = 0.55) had a higher mean score than the less than 10 years' group (M = 3.05, SD = 0.60). The t-statistic (t = 2.50, p = 0.013) indicates a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. This suggests that more experienced teachers perceive their principals as more flexible and better equipped to handle changing educational environments and challenges. Their extensive experience likely enables them to anticipate and respond to disruptions more effectively, fostering resilience and innovation within their schools (Dweck, 2016;

Sull & Eisenhardt, 2022). This finding underscores the importance of fostering a growth mindset and adaptability among school leaders, particularly in the face of rapid technological and societal changes (Whitehead et al., 2025).

The analysis reveals significant experience-based differences in the dimensions of Vision, Human-Centric Leadership, and Adaptability, with more experienced teachers consistently scoring higher than their less experienced counterparts. These findings suggest that experience plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of principals' abilities in vision-building, relationship-focused leadership, and adaptability. This aligns with research by Leithwood et al. (2008), who argue that experienced leaders are better equipped to navigate complex educational environments and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

In contrast, no statistically significant differences were found for Digital Transformation and Sustainability, indicating that these dimensions may be less influenced by years of experience and more dependent on factors such as access to training, institutional policies, or resource availability (Davis, 1989; Hughes & Davis, 2025). This suggests that while experience enhances certain leadership competencies, other areas require targeted interventions, such as professional development programs, policy reforms, and resource allocation, to ensure the successful adoption of Strategic Leadership 5.0 principles.

2. What challenges do Jordanian school principals face in implementing Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices as perceived by their teachers?

The implementation of Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices by Jordanian school principals, as perceived by their teachers, faces significant challenges. Data collected from 300 teachers, comprising 55% male (n=165) and 45% female (n=135) respondents, reflects these varied perspectives. The sample also includes a range of teaching experience, with 43% (n=128) having less than 10 years and 57% (n=172) having 10 or more years in the profession.

Content analysis of the open-ended responses revealed six primary, interconnected challenges hindering the implementation of Strategic Leadership 5.0 in Jordanian schools. The most pervasive challenge, identified by nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%, n ≈ 219), was Financial and Resource Limitations. Teachers consistently described a lack of funding for technology, infrastructure, and basic materials as a fundamental barrier. As one teacher lamented, "We are told to lead digitally, but our school cannot afford reliable internet. How can we transform without the basic tools?" This challenge was felt more acutely by female teachers (75%) and those with over a decade of experience (77%), suggesting that prolonged exposure to the educational system deepens awareness of these chronic funding shortfalls.

The second most cited obstacle, highlighted by 65% of teachers (n ≈ 195), was Systemic and Bureaucratic Barriers. Respondents described a rigid, top-down administrative system that stifles principal autonomy and diverts focus from

strategic leadership to administrative compliance. A typical comment was, "Our principal's hands are tied by ministry regulations. There is no room for innovation when every decision must be approved from the top." This sentiment was strongest among male teachers (67%) and experienced educators (70%), who have likely witnessed numerous initiatives falter against bureaucratic inertia.

Closely related was the third key challenge: Deficits in Leadership Training, noted by 60% of participants ($n \approx 180$). Teachers perceived current professional development as outdated and misaligned with the demands of modern leadership, particularly in areas like digital transformation and sustainability. One respondent stated, "The training provided is theoretical. Our principal needs practical workshops on using data, not more lectures on administrative law." This perception was most common among male teachers (63%) and experienced staff (64%), while younger teachers (53%) were more likely to specifically cite their principals' struggles with technology-driven strategies.

A significant cultural barrier emerged as Resistance to Change, reported by 48% of teachers ($n \approx 144$). This resistance, attributed to deeply entrenched traditions and norms, was seen as a major impediment to innovation. Female teachers (51%) and those with more experience (58%) were more likely to highlight this issue, with one noting, "Many veteran teachers openly resist new initiatives, saying 'this is how we have always done it.' Changing this mindset is an uphill battle." In contrast, less experienced teachers (36%) reported this challenge less frequently, reflecting a generational divide in adaptability.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic was highlighted by half of the respondents (50%, $n \approx 150$) as a crisis that exacerbated pre-existing weaknesses. Teachers observed that principals were overwhelmed by the rapid shift to online learning, with female teachers (53%) and experienced educators (58%) particularly noting the struggle to maintain strategic focus. One teacher recalled, "The pandemic showed our principal was not prepared to lead online learning. The skills and the tools were simply not there." This finding aligns with research highlighting the critical need for adaptive instructional leadership to navigate post-crisis recovery and address associated psychological impacts (Dhandapani & Kaur, 2024).

Finally, Technological Infrastructure and Competency Gaps were identified by 41% of respondents ($n \approx 123$). A clear generational divide was evident, with younger teachers (52%) emphasizing this issue far more than their experienced counterparts (33%). This challenge reflects a critical disconnect between the expectations of digital transformation and the on-the-ground reality of inadequate infrastructure and a lack of digital leadership skills.

The findings present a complex, interdependent ecosystem of barriers that collectively inhibit the adoption of Strategic Leadership 5.0. The overwhelming concern over Financial and Resource Limitations provides crucial context for the quantitative finding of moderate implementation levels, particularly in the Digital

Transformation and Sustainability dimensions. This aligns with broader literature identifying inadequate funding as a primary constraint to educational modernization in developing nations (UNESCO, 2021).

The pervasive Systemic and Bureaucratic Barriers explain the moderate scores in Adaptability and Innovation, as rigid, top-down structures inherently limit a principal's capacity for agile, context-responsive leadership. This finding corroborates research identifying centralized administrative systems as a critical barrier to innovation in developing countries (Ayaz, 2024; Rakhmadi, Puspitaningsih, & Sartika, 2025).

The identified Deficits in Leadership Training point to a fundamental misalignment between existing professional development and the competencies required for Strategic Leadership 5.0. This persistent inadequacy, noted in prior studies (Hughes & Davis, 2025; Hadijah, 2024), underscores the urgent need for the very training programs scholars recommend—those that integrate technological, human-centric, and sustainable leadership approaches (Whitehead, et al., 2025).

The Resistance to Cultural Change and the stark Technological Gaps, exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, highlight the human and infrastructural dimensions of the challenge. The generational and experiential differences in perceiving these barriers underscore that a one-size-fits-all approach to overcoming resistance or implementing technology is unlikely to succeed. The technological gap, in particular, is well-explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), where a lack of perceived ease and usefulness, often due to poor infrastructure and training, hinders adoption. The pandemic's role as a "stress test" for leadership aligns with global studies on its unprecedented impact, exposing systemic deficiencies in readiness and infrastructure (Fullan & Quinn, 2022).

In conclusion, the challenges are not isolated but are deeply synergistic. Financial constraints and bureaucratic rigidity create an environment where innovation is stifled, while inadequate training and cultural resistance ensure that even when opportunities arise, the capacity to capitalize on them is limited. This intricate web of barriers demands a systemic, multi-faceted reform strategy rather than isolated, piecemeal interventions.

3. How can the principles of Strategic Leadership 5.0 be effectively integrated into Jordan's educational leadership framework as perceived by their teachers?

Analysis of qualitative responses revealed eight primary strategies for integrating Strategic Leadership 5.0 into Jordan's educational framework, with notable patterns in their frequency and support across demographic groups:

Professional Development and Capacity Building emerged as the most frequently emphasized strategy, with 62% of respondents (n=186) highlighting

inadequate training as a critical barrier. As one teacher explained, "We need continuous training, not one-off workshops. Pair new principals with successful mentors who have navigated digital change." This perception was particularly strong among female teachers (65%) and experienced educators (68%), who identified specific gaps in emotional intelligence, technological leadership, and vision-driven strategies. These findings align with Kumar and Mishra's (2023) argument that Strategic Leadership 5.0 requires targeted programs addressing both technological proficiency and human-centric competencies. The recommendation for mentorship networks further resonates with established leadership development frameworks that emphasize knowledge sharing and collaborative practices (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Furthermore, this underscores the global imperative, as seen in similar contexts, to prioritize future skills and ongoing development in educator preparation (Eid & Al-Senaidi, 2025).

Financial and Resource Support was identified by 74% of respondents (n=222) as a fundamental prerequisite for implementation. A teacher's comment that "The budget for education must be a national priority. We should also partner with tech companies to get the resources we lack" reflects the widespread recognition that visionary leadership cannot manifest without adequate funding. The slightly higher concern among female teachers (77%) and experienced educators (78%) underscores how prolonged exposure to resource constraints heightens awareness of their impact. This finding corroborates UNESCO's (2021) emphasis on addressing resource gaps for sustainable educational development and aligns with (Singh, 2023; Rani et al., 2025) observation that financial limitations significantly hinder modernization efforts.

The call for Administrative Autonomy and Bureaucratic Reform was emphasized by 68% of teachers (n=204), with one participant noting, "Free our principals from the mountain of paperwork. Give them the authority to make quick decisions that fit our school's specific needs." The stronger concern among male teachers (70%) and experienced educators (72%) suggests that prolonged exposure to institutional structures heightens awareness of bureaucratic limitations. This finding supports Ayaz's (2024) and Karimi, & Khawaja, (2025) research identifying rigid administrative systems as a critical barrier and aligns with calls for "distributed leadership autonomy" as a key enabler for school-level innovation in post-pandemic reforms. The recommendation for decentralized decision-making represents a fundamental shift from the current top-down approach that characterizes many Jordanian educational institutions.

Cultural Transformation and Change Readiness was highlighted by 51% of respondents (n=153), with particularly strong support from female teachers (56%) who noted that "The ministry must involve teachers and parents in planning new initiatives. When people are part of the solution, they don't resist the change." The generational difference in perceptions—with experienced teachers (60%) more likely to report resistance than younger colleagues (37%)—suggests that

familiarity with institutional traditions increases awareness of cultural barriers. These findings align with Fullan and Quinn's (2022) principles of Strategic Leadership 5.0, which emphasize inclusivity and collaboration as essential for meaningful organizational transformation.

Technology Integration and Digital Transformation was emphasized by 42% of respondents (n=126), with a significant generational divide showing younger teachers (55%) expressing stronger concern than their experienced counterparts (33%). As one less experienced teacher noted, "It's not enough to give us tablets. Our principal needs to learn how to use data from these tools to improve teaching and learning." This disparity highlights the influence of digital familiarity on technology adoption perspectives, consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model's emphasis on perceived ease of use and utility (Davis, 1989). The findings further resonate with Hughes & Davis (2025) work identifying digital transformation as a cornerstone of Leadership 5.0.

Policy Alignment and Curriculum Integration was identified by 47% of respondents (n=141) as essential for sustainable change. Experienced teachers (54%) were more likely to emphasize this need, with one noting that "The official job description for a principal is outdated. It should require skills in digital leadership and sustainability." This strategy resonates with Whitehead, et al. (2025) call for institutionalizing modern leadership frameworks and aligns with United Nations (2015) educational reforms under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As emphasized in a recent framework for the Middle East, without explicit policy mandates that redefine leadership competencies, sustainable change remains elusive (Rakhmadi, Puspitaningsih, & Sartika, 2025).

Collaborative Networks and Partnerships were supported by 50% of teachers (n=150), with younger educators (55%) showing greater enthusiasm for this approach. The recommendation to "create a network where principals can share successes and failures in implementing new technology or teaching methods" reflects recognition of the power of professional learning communities. This aligns with Fullan and Quinn's (2022) emphasis on building collaborative cultures to drive systemic change and Niu, & Huang (2025) assertion that global partnerships can enrich local leadership practices.

Finally, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems were emphasized by 49% of respondents (n=147), with experienced teachers (54%) particularly highlighting the need for "a clear system to measure what makes a principal effective in the 21st century." This finding aligns with Leithwood et al.'s (2008) research on the importance of evidence-based evaluation in educational leadership and reflects a sophisticated understanding that accountability mechanisms are essential for sustained improvement.

Ultimately, these eight strategies form an interdependent ecosystem for change. Financial resources enable technological infrastructure; autonomy and cultural readiness allow for contextualized innovation; capacity building develops

necessary skills; collaborative networks support continuous learning; aligned policies create enabling conditions; and monitoring systems ensure continuous improvement. This comprehensive approach addresses the multifaceted nature of leadership transformation, positioning Strategic Leadership 5.0 not as a standalone initiative but as an integrated framework for educational advancement in Jordan.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the adoption of Strategic Leadership 5.0 practices among school principals in Jordan, as perceived by their teachers. The findings reveal a landscape of moderate implementation across all five core dimensions—Leadership Vision, Digital Transformation, Human-Centric Leadership, Sustainability, and Adaptability. Significant disparities were observed based on teacher sex and experience, and the qualitative data uncovered a complex web of interconnected barriers, including rigid bureaucracy, insufficient resources, inadequate training, and cultural resistance to change. The central conclusion is that while the intent for strategic leadership exists, its effective execution is significantly constrained by systemic, cultural, and resource-related challenges unique to the Jordanian context.

Implications of the Findings

The findings carry critical implications for educational practice and policy in Jordan and similar developing nations:

Practical Implications: The moderate adoption levels indicate a significant gap between contemporary leadership theory and on-the-ground practice. School principals require immediate and targeted support. The disparities based on teacher demographics suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development is insufficient; instead, tailored programs are needed to address specific perceptual and experiential gaps, particularly in empowering female leaders and leveraging the experience of senior educators. This aligns with interdisciplinary research calling for teacher education and leadership development to be restructured around the cultivation of essential future skills (Eid & Al-Senaidi, 2025).

Policy Implications: The identification of bureaucratic and financial constraints as primary barriers points to a need for systemic reform. Policymakers must consider decentralizing decision-making to grant principals greater autonomy and revisiting funding models to ensure schools have the necessary infrastructure and technological tools. Furthermore, national teacher and principal development frameworks must be updated to explicitly incorporate the competencies of Strategic Leadership 5.0.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and their implications, the following actions are recommended:

1. Implement Differentiated Leadership Development: The Ministry of Education, in partnership with universities, should design and deliver mandatory, ongoing professional development for principals focused on the specific deficits identified: digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, change management, and sustainable resource management.
2. Empower Principals through Autonomy: Pilot programs should be initiated to grant school principals increased autonomy over budgetary and curricular decisions, reducing the burden of centralized bureaucracy and fostering a culture of localized innovation.
3. Invest in Infrastructure and Resources: A strategic investment in educational technology infrastructure is paramount. This should be coupled with the establishment of public-private partnerships to bridge funding gaps and provide schools with the modern tools required for digital transformation.
4. Foster a Change-Ready Culture: Ministry-led initiatives should promote stakeholder engagement and cultural awareness campaigns to help schools navigate the transition from traditional to innovative practices, building buy-in from teachers, parents, and the community.

This study provides valuable insights into the implementation of Strategic Leadership 5.0 in Jordanian schools; however, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the findings are based solely on teachers' perceptions rather than direct observations of principals' leadership practices or measurable school outcomes, which may introduce perceptual bias. Second, the study was conducted only in the Zarqa governorate, limiting the generalizability of the results to other regions of Jordan. Future research should adopt more comprehensive and longitudinal approaches to better understand the impact of Strategic Leadership 5.0 on educational improvement. Studies employing mixed-methods designs could examine how leadership practices influence student achievement, school climate, and institutional development over time. Expanding the research to rural and southern regions of Jordan would also provide a broader national perspective. Furthermore, future investigations should include principals' perspectives through in-depth interviews to better understand their challenges, experiences, and professional support needs. Comparative cross-cultural studies involving other developing nations may also help identify transferable best practices and contextual differences in implementing Strategic Leadership 5.0.

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AIEMAN AL-OMARI, PhD, is a professor of higher education administration in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan. His major research interests lie in educational leadership, higher education administration, strategic planning, and faculty development. Email: aieman66@hu.edu.jo