

Rethinking leadership effectiveness in education: Empirical validation of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory among educational supervisors

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Received date: 9/6/2026

Acceptance date: 15/7/2026

Available Online: 31/8/2026

ABSTRACT

Educational leadership effectiveness remains a central concern in contemporary educational research due to its influence on teacher development, organizational improvement, and the quality of educational practices. While recent leadership studies have emphasized transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership approaches, classical contingency theories continue to provide valuable perspectives for understanding how leadership behaviours contribute to organizational effectiveness. This study examined the applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory among educational supervisors in the Sultanate of Oman by investigating the dimensions of task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness. A quantitative survey design was employed among 291 senior teachers selected through stratified random sampling from schools across four educational governorates in Oman. Data were analyzed using reliability analysis and construct validity procedures to examine the measurement quality and theoretical structure of the leadership instrument. The findings demonstrated excellent internal consistency for the overall leadership scale and its three dimensions. Strong relationships were also identified among task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness, providing empirical support for Reddin's multidimensional leadership perspective. The study contributes to educational leadership scholarship by demonstrating the continued relevance of contingency-based leadership theory within an Arab educational context and by emphasizing that leadership should be evaluated not only through observable behaviours but also through their effectiveness in achieving meaningful educational outcomes.

Keywords: Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory, educational supervision, leadership effectiveness, task orientation, relationship orientation, Oman

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has become one of the most significant factors influencing the quality of educational systems, teacher professional development, organizational improvement, and student learning outcomes. As schools and educational institutions continue to experience increasing demands for accountability, innovation, digital transformation, and sustainable improvement, understanding the characteristics of effective leadership has become a central concern in educational research (Leithwood et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2021). Educational supervisors, in particular, play an important role in guiding teachers, supporting professional growth, monitoring educational practices, and facilitating improvements in teaching and learning

processes. Therefore, identifying the leadership dimensions that contribute to effective supervision remains an important area of investigation.

Recent international evidence further suggests that school leadership influences educational quality not only through administrative management but also through teacher effectiveness, school climate, instructional improvement, and organizational learning. Contemporary reviews indicate that leadership practices remain among the strongest school-level factors associated with sustainable school improvement and teacher professional growth (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). These developments reinforce the importance of examining leadership effectiveness using theoretically robust frameworks that explain not only leadership behaviours but also their contribution to organizational outcomes.

Over the past several decades, leadership research has developed through several theoretical perspectives, including trait theories, behavioural approaches, and contingency theories. Early leadership scholars emphasized the importance of personal characteristics associated with leadership effectiveness (Stogdill, 1948). Later, behavioural leadership approaches shifted attention toward observable leadership practices, particularly the two major dimensions of task orientation and relationship orientation (Fleishman, 1953; Likert, 1961). These perspectives contributed significantly to understanding how leaders organize work, achieve objectives, and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. However, behavioural approaches alone provide limited explanations regarding why similar leadership behaviours may produce different outcomes across different organizational contexts (Fiedler, 1967).

Although behavioural leadership theories continue to provide an important foundation for understanding leadership practices, contemporary educational research increasingly argues that leadership behaviours should ultimately be evaluated according to their influence on teaching quality, professional collaboration, and school improvement. Recent syntheses of educational leadership research suggest that effective leadership combines behavioural competence with organizational responsiveness and contextual adaptation, thereby reinforcing the continued relevance of contingency perspectives (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory introduced an important extension to behavioural leadership perspectives by adding effectiveness as a third dimension of leadership (Reddin, 1970). Unlike traditional behavioural models that primarily focused on what leaders do, Reddin argued that leadership should ultimately be evaluated according to whether those behaviours produce effective outcomes within a particular situation. Thus, leadership effectiveness is not simply a result of adopting a specific style but depends on the relationship between leadership behaviour, contextual demands, and organizational objectives.

Contemporary educational leadership research has expanded through influential perspectives such as transformational leadership, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and teacher leadership. These approaches have generated valuable insights into how educational leaders influence school culture, teacher motivation, professional learning, and organizational change (Bass, 1985; Hallinger, 2005; Spillane, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2020). However, the strong focus on contemporary leadership models has resulted in comparatively limited empirical attention being given to classical contingency theories and their continuing relevance in modern educational environments.

The question of leadership effectiveness remains particularly important in educational supervision. Supervisors operate in complex environments where they must balance administrative responsibilities, professional relationships, teacher development, and institutional improvement. In such contexts, task orientation and relationship orientation alone may not fully explain leadership success; rather, effectiveness represents an essential dimension for understanding whether leadership practices achieve meaningful educational outcomes (Yukl,

2020). Nevertheless, empirical studies examining the continued applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory remain limited, particularly within Arab educational contexts.

From a contemporary perspective, Reddin's emphasis on effectiveness aligns with current educational leadership research, which increasingly recognizes that leadership quality should be evaluated according to its capacity to improve instructional practices, support teacher development, and facilitate continuous organizational learning rather than through leadership behaviours alone (Yukl, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory among educational supervisors in the Sultanate of Oman. Specifically, the study investigates the reliability, construct validity, and relationships among task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness in order to determine whether the theoretical structure proposed by Reddin remains relevant in contemporary educational supervision. By examining this classical leadership framework within an Arab educational setting, the study contributes empirical evidence to ongoing discussions regarding leadership effectiveness and the continued value of contingency-based leadership theories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution of Leadership Theory: From Behavioural Approaches to Contingency Perspectives

Leadership theory has developed through several major stages as scholars have attempted to explain why some leaders achieve greater organizational outcomes than others. Early leadership research focused primarily on identifying personal characteristics and traits associated with effective leaders. However, the limitations of trait-based explanations encouraged researchers to examine leadership behaviours and the ways leaders interact with organizational members (Stogdill, 1948).

The behavioural approach represented an important shift in leadership research by focusing on what leaders do rather than who leaders are. Studies conducted by the Ohio State and Michigan research groups identified two central dimensions of leadership behaviour: task orientation and relationship orientation (Fleishman, 1953; Likert, 1961). Task-oriented behaviours emphasize goal achievement, planning, coordination, and performance standards, whereas relationship-oriented behaviours focus on communication, support, trust, and interpersonal relationships. These dimensions became fundamental concepts in explaining leadership practices across different organizational contexts (Yukl, 2020).

Although behavioural leadership theories provided valuable insights into leadership practices, they were criticized for providing limited explanations regarding why similar leadership behaviours may produce different outcomes in different situations. This limitation contributed to the emergence of contingency approaches, which proposed that leadership effectiveness depends on the interaction between leadership behaviours and contextual conditions (Fiedler, 1967).

Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory

Among contingency-based leadership theories, Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory introduced a significant contribution by extending traditional behavioural perspectives. Reddin (1970) argued that leadership should not be evaluated only

according to task orientation and relationship orientation, but also according to effectiveness. According to this perspective, leadership effectiveness depends on whether a particular leadership style is appropriate for the demands of a specific situation and produces desired organizational outcomes.

Reddin's model represents an important theoretical distinction because it separates leadership behaviour from leadership effectiveness. Task orientation and relationship orientation describe the behaviours demonstrated by leaders, whereas effectiveness represents the extent to which those behaviours successfully achieve organizational objectives. Therefore, leadership effectiveness is not viewed as an automatic outcome of a particular leadership style but as a product of the relationship between leadership behaviour, situational demands, and organizational goals (Reddin, 1970).

This theoretical distinction remains relevant to educational organizations, where leaders operate within complex environments involving accountability requirements, teacher development, organizational change, and improvement initiatives. Contemporary educational leadership research increasingly recognizes that effective leadership requires not only the demonstration of appropriate behaviours but also the ability to produce meaningful educational outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Contemporary Educational Leadership and the Question of Effectiveness

Contemporary educational leadership research has expanded considerably through approaches such as transformational leadership, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and teacher leadership. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision development, motivation, professional commitment, and organizational change (Bass, 1985). Within educational contexts, transformational leaders have been associated with improved teacher commitment, collaborative school cultures, and organizational development (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Instructional leadership has emphasized the central role of school leaders in improving teaching and learning through curriculum supervision, teacher support, and monitoring instructional practices (Hallinger, 2005). More recent scholarship further argues that leadership for learning requires sustained attention to instructional quality, teacher professional development, and organizational capacity building, thereby extending traditional instructional leadership into broader processes of continuous school improvement (Hallinger, 2011).

Likewise, digital transformation has introduced new expectations for school leaders. Research conducted within Arab educational settings has shown that digital leadership competencies have become increasingly important for managing educational change, supporting remote learning environments, and improving institutional performance (Al-Sumairat & Bayan, 2023). These developments further emphasize the need to understand leadership effectiveness beyond traditional behavioural classifications.

These contemporary perspectives have significantly enriched understanding of educational leadership. However, their increasing dominance has also resulted in comparatively less attention being given to classical contingency theories and the question of leadership effectiveness as a distinct theoretical dimension. Recent

discussions in educational leadership continue to emphasize the need to understand how leadership practices translate into sustainable improvement, teacher development, and organizational outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Educational Supervision and Leadership Effectiveness

Educational supervision provides an important context for examining leadership effectiveness because supervisors perform multiple responsibilities, including supporting teachers, monitoring educational quality, facilitating professional learning, and promoting institutional improvement. Effective supervision requires a balance between achieving organizational objectives and maintaining constructive professional relationships.

Contemporary supervision increasingly requires educational leaders to integrate instructional guidance, collaborative professional learning, data-informed decision-making, and adaptive leadership practices. These responsibilities illustrate why leadership effectiveness should be viewed as the successful integration of behavioural competencies with contextual responsiveness rather than as the application of fixed leadership styles (Grissom et al., 2021).

From Reddin's perspective, educational supervisors must adapt their leadership behaviours according to contextual demands. Task-oriented behaviours may support planning, coordination, and accountability, while relationship-oriented behaviours may strengthen collaboration, trust, and teacher motivation. However, the ultimate criterion remains whether these behaviours contribute to effective educational outcomes.

Despite the continued relevance of this argument, limited empirical research has examined the applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory within contemporary educational supervision, particularly in Arab educational contexts. Much of the current literature has focused on newer leadership approaches, creating a need to revisit whether classical contingency theories continue to provide meaningful explanations of leadership effectiveness.

Research Gap

Although leadership theories have progressed significantly, the relationship among task orientation, relationship orientation, and effectiveness remains an important theoretical question. Contemporary educational leadership research has generated extensive knowledge about different leadership approaches; however, fewer studies have empirically examined whether effectiveness continues to function as a distinct and essential dimension of leadership.

Therefore, investigating the construct validity of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory provides an opportunity to evaluate the continued relevance of contingency-based leadership thinking within modern educational organizations. This study addresses this gap by examining the validity and applicability of Reddin's model among educational supervisors in the Sultanate of Oman.

While contemporary educational leadership literature has expanded considerably, relatively few empirical studies have revisited classical contingency theories within Arab educational contexts. Consequently, additional evidence is needed

to determine whether Reddin's multidimensional framework continues to explain leadership effectiveness alongside more recent leadership paradigms.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey approach to examine the applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory among educational supervisors in the Sultanate of Oman. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to examine the measurement structure, reliability, and construct validity of the three proposed leadership dimensions: task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness. Survey research provides an effective approach for systematically measuring participants' perceptions and evaluating theoretical constructs through statistical procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of 1,217 senior teachers working in 378 basic and post-basic education schools distributed across 20 wilayats within four educational governorates in the Sultanate of Oman. The selected governorates included Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, and Al Buraimi.

A total of 291 senior teachers participated in the study, representing approximately 23.9% of the total population. The sample was drawn from 191 schools, providing broad geographical and organizational representation. The relatively large sampling proportion and inclusion of multiple educational regions provided an appropriate empirical basis for examining the validity and reliability of the leadership instrument.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the study population across the educational governorates.

Table1
Distribution of the Study Population by Educational Governorate

Educational Governorate	Wilayats	Schools	Senior Teachers
Muscat	6	142	435
Al Dakhiliyah	8	138	486
Al Dhahirah	3	71	218
Al Buraimi	3	27	78
Total	20	378	1,217

The final sample consisted of 128 male participants (44.0%) and 163 female participants (56.0%). Participants represented diverse academic qualifications and professional experience levels, allowing the study to capture different perspectives regarding educational supervision practices.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure appropriate representation across educational governorates and administrative areas. Stratified sampling is particularly suitable when a population consists of identifiable subgroups because it enhances representativeness and reduces the likelihood that findings reflect only a specific segment of the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The sampling process ensured representation from different geographical locations and educational institutions. The final sample represented approximately one-quarter of the target population, providing a strong basis for statistical analysis.

Instrument Structure

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory (Reddin, 1970). The leadership instrument consisted of 36 items designed to measure three theoretically distinct but related dimensions: task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness.

The instrument was intentionally designed with an equal number of items for each dimension to ensure balanced operationalization of the theoretical model.

Table2
Structure of the Leadership Instrument

Dimension	Number of Items
Task Orientation	12
Relationship Orientation	12
Leadership Effectiveness	12
Total	36

The balanced structure of the instrument provided direct measurement of Reddin's theoretical proposition that leadership effectiveness emerges from the interaction between leadership behaviours and situational demands. Therefore, the instrument design allowed empirical examination of whether the three-dimensional structure proposed by Reddin remains applicable within contemporary educational supervision.

Validity Procedures

To examine the validity of the instrument, construct validity procedures were conducted. These procedures included examining relationships among the three leadership dimensions and assessing whether the observed structure reflected Reddin's theoretical framework. Factor analysis procedures were also conducted to determine whether the empirical data supported the proposed dimensions.

Reliability Procedures

The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability analysis was conducted for the overall leadership scale and for each individual dimension. Cronbach's alpha values were interpreted according to accepted psychometric standards (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), with higher values indicating stronger internal consistency among items measuring the same construct.

Validity Procedures

The validity of the instrument was examined through construct validity procedures. The analysis focused on determining whether the three leadership dimensions proposed by Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory represented related but theoretically distinguishable components of leadership. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among task orientation, relationship orientation, leadership effectiveness, and the overall leadership construct. In addition, factor-based validation procedures were considered to evaluate whether the empirical structure reflected the theoretical dimensions of the model.

Reliability Procedures

The internal consistency reliability of the leadership instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability analysis was conducted for the overall leadership scale and each individual dimension. The interpretation of reliability coefficients followed established psychometric standards, where alpha values above .70 indicate acceptable internal consistency and values above .90 indicate excellent reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, while construct validity was examined through correlation analysis and factor-based validation procedures. These analyses were conducted to determine whether the empirical evidence supported the three-dimensional structure proposed by Reddin's Leadership Theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Scale

The internal consistency reliability of the leadership instrument was examined before evaluating the theoretical structure of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory. Table 3 presents the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the overall leadership scale and its three dimensions.

These findings are consistent with contemporary leadership research emphasizing that effective school leadership should ultimately be evaluated according to its contribution to teaching quality, professional learning, and sustainable school improvement (Hallinger, 2011).

Table 3
Internal Consistency Reliability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Scale

Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Task Orientation	12	.945	Excellent
Relationship Orientation	12	.952	Excellent
Leadership Effectiveness	12	.940	Excellent
Overall Leadership Scale	36	.978	Excellent

The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate excellent internal consistency across all dimensions of the leadership scale. The high reliability coefficients indicate that the items within each dimension consistently measured the intended leadership constructs. These results provide strong measurement support for examining Reddin's theoretical proposition that leadership consists of three related but distinguishable dimensions.

Evidence of Construct Validity

Following reliability assessment, construct validity was examined by analyzing the relationships among the three leadership dimensions and the overall leadership construct. Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients between the dimensions and the overall leadership scale.

Table 4
Relationships Between Leadership Dimensions and the Overall Leadership Construct

Relationship	Correlation (r)
Overall Leadership – Task Orientation	.942
Overall Leadership – Relationship Orientation	.945
Overall Leadership – Leadership Effectiveness	.967

The results in Table 4 indicate strong relationships between each dimension and the overall leadership construct. Leadership effectiveness demonstrated the strongest association with the overall leadership scale ($r = .967$), followed by relationship orientation ($r = .945$) and task orientation ($r = .942$). These findings suggest that all three dimensions contribute substantially to the broader concept of leadership.

Additional analysis of the relationships among the three dimensions showed strong positive correlations ranging from .813 to .894. Although the dimensions were highly related, the correlations did not indicate complete overlap, suggesting that task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness represent interconnected but conceptually distinct components of leadership.

Empirical Support for Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Structure

To connect the statistical findings directly with theoretical propositions, the evidence supporting Reddin's model is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Evidence Supporting Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory

Theoretical Proposition	Empirical Evidence	Interpretation
Leadership consists of three dimensions	Three theoretically aligned dimensions demonstrated strong measurement properties	Supported
Leadership dimensions are interconnected	Strong positive relationships among dimensions (.813–.894)	Supported
Effectiveness represents a central leadership dimension	Leadership effectiveness showed the strongest relationship with overall leadership ($r = .967$)	Supported

Table 5 demonstrates that the empirical findings provide substantial support for Reddin's theoretical proposition. The results suggest that leadership cannot be understood solely through behavioural orientations; rather, effectiveness represents an essential dimension that determines whether leadership behaviours produce meaningful outcomes.

Implications for Educational Supervision

The findings have important implications for educational supervision. The results suggest that effective supervisors should not be evaluated only according to their ability to complete administrative tasks or maintain positive interpersonal relationships. While both task orientation and relationship orientation remain important, the ultimate criterion of leadership success is whether these behaviours contribute to effective educational outcomes.

Within contemporary educational environments, supervisors are required to balance organizational objectives, teacher development, professional relationships, and improvement initiatives. Therefore, Reddin's emphasis on effectiveness provides a valuable perspective for understanding educational leadership beyond the identification of leadership styles alone.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This is the missing discussion section.

Here we explain:

Theoretical Implications

The present study provides empirical support for the continued relevance of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory within contemporary educational settings. Although educational leadership research has increasingly emphasized transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership approaches, the present findings demonstrate that Reddin's contingency-based perspective continues to offer valuable explanatory power.

These findings are also consistent with recent international evidence suggesting that effective educational leadership depends on the interaction between leadership behaviours, contextual responsiveness, and organizational improvement rather than on behavioural dimensions alone (Leithwood et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2021).

Specifically, the strong relationships among task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness indicate that effective educational leadership cannot be understood solely through behavioural dimensions. Rather, leadership effectiveness emerges from the successful alignment between leadership behaviours and organizational demands. These findings reinforce Reddin's proposition that effectiveness represents an independent and essential dimension of leadership rather than merely an outcome of behavioural styles. Consequently, the study contributes to leadership theory by extending empirical evidence supporting contingency-based leadership within modern educational organizations and within an Arab educational context.

Practical Implications

The findings also provide several practical implications for educational supervision and leadership development.

First, professional development programs for educational supervisors should move beyond developing administrative competencies alone and place greater emphasis on strengthening interpersonal communication, collaborative problem-solving, and adaptive leadership skills.

Second, leadership evaluation systems should assess not only supervisors' observable behaviours but also the effectiveness of those behaviours in improving teacher performance, professional learning, and school development.

Third, educational authorities may consider incorporating Reddin's multidimensional perspective into leadership preparation programs to encourage supervisors to balance task accomplishment with relationship building while remaining responsive to contextual demands.

These recommendations are also consistent with contemporary educational leadership literature emphasizing leadership development, instructional improvement, and professional learning as central mechanisms for improving school performance (Grissom et al., 2021). Such an approach may contribute to more effective supervision and sustainable educational improvement.

Contextual Implications

This study also contributes important evidence from the Sultanate of Oman, where empirical examinations of classical contingency leadership theories remain limited. The findings suggest that Reddin's theoretical framework retains considerable explanatory value despite the emergence of newer leadership paradigms. By validating the three-dimensional structure of leadership within an Arab educational system, the study demonstrates that classical leadership theories continue to provide useful conceptual foundations for understanding educational leadership across diverse cultural and organizational contexts. The results therefore encourage future comparative studies examining whether similar patterns of leadership effectiveness exist across different educational systems and cultural environments.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory within the context of educational supervision in the Sultanate of Oman. Although contemporary educational leadership research has increasingly emphasized transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership perspectives, the findings of this study demonstrate that classical contingency-based approaches continue to provide valuable insights into understanding leadership effectiveness.

The results provided strong empirical support for the three dimensions proposed by Reddin: task orientation, relationship orientation, and leadership effectiveness. The leadership instrument demonstrated excellent reliability, while the relationships among the dimensions indicated that they represent interconnected but distinguishable components of leadership. These findings reinforce Reddin's proposition that leadership effectiveness should not be evaluated solely through observable behaviours, but also through the extent to which those behaviours contribute to meaningful organizational outcomes.

The study contributes to educational leadership scholarship by revisiting the role of effectiveness as a central dimension of leadership within contemporary educational organizations. In the context of educational supervision, the findings suggest that successful supervisors require a balanced combination of goal achievement, professional relationships, and the ability to produce effective educational outcomes.

Collectively, the findings support recent international scholarship arguing that leadership effectiveness remains a multidimensional construct requiring the integration of behavioural competence, contextual adaptation, and organizational outcomes. In this respect, Reddin's framework continues to offer an important theoretical contribution alongside contemporary leadership models.

Future research may further examine the relevance of Reddin's framework across different educational contexts and compare its explanatory power with contemporary leadership models such as transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership. Such investigations may contribute to the continued development of more comprehensive frameworks for understanding leadership effectiveness in twenty-first-century education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Department of Education and Humanities at the University of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman, for providing the academic environment and institutional support that contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the university administration and relevant educational authorities for their cooperation and facilitation throughout the research process.

The authors also gratefully acknowledge the senior teachers and educational professionals who participated in this study and generously provided their valuable perspectives and responses. Their contribution was essential to examining leadership practices and the applicability of Reddin's Three-Dimensional Leadership Theory within the educational supervision context in Oman.

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