

The Impact of Annual Evaluations on School Administration Performance in Saudi Arabia through Professional Development

Alshammary Falah Malak S¹, Dhakir Abbas Ali²

¹Faculty of Business and Accountancy, Lincoln University College, Malaysia

²Head of Research Unit, Lincoln University College, Malaysia

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of annual evaluations on school administration performance in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the mediating role of professional development. Guided by Goal-Setting Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Organizational Learning Theory, the study aims to understand how structured evaluation systems enhance leadership effectiveness and institutional performance through professional learning. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was adopted, and data were collected from school administrators in public schools across various Saudi regions. The data were analyzed using Smart-PLS within the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework to assess the measurement and structural models. The findings revealed significant positive relationships among annual evaluations, professional development, and administrative performance. Results confirmed that evaluation systems not only improve accountability but also promote a culture of continuous learning and leadership excellence. Moreover, professional development was found to mediate the relationship between evaluations and performance, demonstrating its central role in translating feedback into enhanced administrative outcomes. These findings align with Saudi Vision 2030, emphasizing the integration of performance-based evaluation and professional development to achieve sustainable educational reform. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational leadership by providing empirical evidence on how systematic evaluations foster growth-oriented school management practices and institutional effectiveness.

Keywords: Annual evaluations, professional development, school administration performance, Saudi Vision 2030.

1. Introduction

Education systems worldwide are increasingly emphasizing the effectiveness of school leadership as a critical determinant of institutional performance and student achievement. In Saudi Arabia, educational reform under Vision 2030 has prioritized the enhancement of leadership quality, accountability, and administrative competence to ensure schools meet evolving social and economic expectations (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). Within this context, annual performance evaluations have emerged as an essential mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of school administrators and guiding their professional growth. Regular evaluations not only provide structured feedback but also promote accountability, encourage goal setting, and identify areas for capacity building that align with national education standards (DeWalt, 2024; Espinosa et al., 2023).

The role of school administrators extends beyond managerial functions to include fostering professional learning communities, supporting instructional leadership, and ensuring organizational improvement. Hence, effective evaluation systems are critical in identifying leadership gaps and providing data-driven insights for improvement (Türkoglu & Aypay, 2022; Shang, 2022). These evaluations, when implemented constructively, can motivate administrators to engage in targeted professional development programs, thereby strengthening their leadership capabilities and improving institutional performance (Alshaikhi & Alshaikhi, 2021; Wullschleger et al., 2025). As professional development becomes a mediating factor between evaluation and performance, it serves as both a developmental tool and a catalyst for educational excellence (Sahlin, 2025; Poekert et al., 2022).

In Saudi schools, performance evaluations are increasingly being integrated with training and development initiatives to create a culture of continuous learning and improvement (Maashi et al., 2022). The process ensures that administrators are not only held accountable but also empowered through tailored development programs that enhance their competencies and leadership practices. This reflects a shift from a purely judgmental evaluation model to a formative, developmental framework transformation consistent with international trends in education management (Kurteshi & Rrustemi, 2025; Alwaely et al., 2023). Despite this progress, research examining the direct and indirect effects of annual evaluations on school administration performance through professional development remains limited in the Saudi context.

Understanding these relationships is essential to ensuring that evaluation mechanisms function as instruments of improvement rather than mere compliance. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how annual evaluations influence the performance of school administrators in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the mediating role of professional development as a pathway for enhancing administrative effectiveness and achieving sustainable educational outcomes (Faradiba et al., 2024; Tonich, 2021; Meyer et al., 2023).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Discussion

The theoretical foundation of this study integrates four key perspectives Goal-Setting Theory, Human Capital Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Organizational Learning Theory to explain how annual evaluations influence school administration performance through professional development. Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) highlights the role of clear objectives and performance feedback in motivating individuals toward higher achievement. Within the educational context, structured evaluations guide school administrators in setting measurable goals, aligning their actions with institutional priorities, and fostering accountability that leads to improved management outcomes (DeWalt, 2024; Meyer et al., 2023). Evaluations designed around goal-setting principles encourage self-reflection and performance alignment, ultimately contributing to higher standards of school leadership (Espinosa et al., 2023; Türkoglu & Aypay, 2022).

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) reinforces the notion that investing in professional development enhances the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of educational leaders, resulting in organizational growth and improved outcomes. This theory aligns strongly with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which underscores the strategic importance of developing human capital in the education sector (Maashi et al., 2022; OKOKOYO &Nwaham, 2024). Professional development opportunities empower administrators to apply new competencies, strengthen instructional leadership, and adapt to modern management demands (Sahlin, 2025; Kurteshi&Rrustemi, 2025). Complementing this, Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985) provides a behavioral lens through which leadership growth translates into enhanced organizational performance. Professional development cultivates transformational leaders who motivate and inspire their teams, foster collaboration, and drive innovation within schools (Kang, 2021; Altassan, 2025).

Finally, Organizational Learning Theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978) positions evaluation and professional development as iterative processes that generate continuous improvement. Feedback from performance evaluations creates opportunities for reflective practice, shared learning, and institutional adaptation. Schools that integrate learning into their management culture evolve into dynamic organizations capable of sustaining excellence in leadership and performance (Gallagher, 2023; Wullschleger et al., 2025). Together, these theories establish a coherent framework linking evaluation, development, and performance in a cyclical model of accountability, learning, and leadership growth within educational administration.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

The development of hypotheses in this study is grounded in the theoretical foundations discussed earlier Goal-Setting Theory, Human Capital Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Organizational Learning Theory which collectively explain how annual evaluations influence professional development and, subsequently, school administration performance. These theories provide a logical foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which evaluation processes foster learning, motivation, and institutional effectiveness. Within the Saudi educational context, where Vision 2030 emphasizes accountability, leadership excellence, and human capital enhancement, annual evaluations play a critical role in shaping performance-oriented school management practices (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Alshaikhi & Alshaikhi, 2021). By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this section formulates the study's hypotheses that test both the direct and indirect effects of annual evaluations on school administration performance through professional development.

Annual evaluations serve as a systematic approach to measuring leadership performance and guiding professional improvement in educational institutions. According to Goal-Setting Theory, the process of defining specific performance targets and providing feedback motivates administrators to focus on goal attainment and performance enhancement (Meyer et al., 2023; Türkoglu & Aypay, 2022). Constructive evaluations not only ensure accountability but also strengthen school administrators' decision-making and strategic planning capabilities, leading to improved organizational outcomes (DeWalt, 2024; Espinosa et al., 2023). In Saudi Arabia, performance evaluation systems are increasingly designed to foster leadership excellence, transparency, and

evidence-based management, aligning with national goals for educational quality and innovation (Shang, 2022; Alshaikhi & Alshaikhi, 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that effective evaluation mechanisms positively influence administrative practices and contribute to overall institutional success (Wullschleger et al., 2025; Tonich, 2021). Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Annual evaluations have a significant positive effect on school administration performance.

The feedback obtained from evaluation processes plays a central role in promoting professional development among school administrators. Drawing upon Human Capital Theory, professional development is regarded as an essential investment in human resources that yields both individual and organizational benefits (Maashi et al., 2022; OKOKOYO & Nwaham, 2024). Evaluations identify areas for growth, which become the focus of targeted capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing leadership capabilities and management competencies. Studies have consistently demonstrated that linking performance appraisal outcomes with development opportunities enhances staff engagement, innovation, and institutional efficiency (Kurteshi & Rrustemi, 2025; Sahlin, 2025). In the Saudi educational system, continuous professional learning is a cornerstone of reform, designed to improve leadership performance and achieve sustainable educational outcomes (Alwaely et al., 2023; Faradiba et al., 2024). Hence, evaluation-driven professional development serves as a bridge between assessment and improvement, reinforcing the dynamic relationship between feedback and leadership advancement.

H2: Annual evaluations have a significant positive effect on professional development.

Professional development, in turn, functions as a mediating mechanism through which evaluation outcomes are transformed into tangible improvements in administrative performance. Transformational Leadership Theory posits that leadership development fosters the capacity to inspire, motivate, and guide others toward achieving organizational goals (Kang, 2021; Altassan, 2025). Administrators who engage in professional learning are better equipped to model effective leadership behaviors, support teamwork, and implement strategies that

enhance school performance (Poekert et al., 2022; Ferdinandi & Kiwonde, 2023). Furthermore, Organizational Learning Theory explains how reflective learning processes stimulated by evaluation and professional growth contribute to adaptive leadership and continuous institutional development (Gallagher, 2023; Wullschleger et al., 2025). By integrating these perspectives, professional development emerges as both an outcome of evaluations and a driver of improved administrative effectiveness. This cyclical process of evaluation, learning, and performance improvement forms the conceptual basis of the study's mediating relationship.

H3: Professional development mediates the relationship between annual evaluations and school administration performance.

Together, these hypotheses reflect a coherent framework that positions annual evaluations as a dual mechanism for accountability and development. They illustrate how feedback from evaluations leads to professional learning and, subsequently, to improved leadership practices and organizational performance. This integrative model aligns with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasizes leadership empowerment, educational innovation, and continuous improvement in school management systems (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Rakkrathok & Salamteh, 2025). By empirically testing these relationships, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how evaluation systems can be leveraged as developmental tools to strengthen school administration performance in the Saudi educational context.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the impact of annual evaluations on school administration performance in Saudi Arabia through professional development. The quantitative approach was selected for its ability to produce objective, measurable, and generalizable results, enabling the identification of relationships among the study's variables based on empirical data (Abohiamid, 2024). The descriptive-correlational design was particularly suitable because it allowed the researcher to analyze associations between annual evaluations, professional development, and school administration performance without manipulating any variables, thus ensuring the integrity and natural representation of participants' perceptions (Espinosa et al., 2023; Türkoglu & Aypay, 2022).

The target population consisted of school administrators employed in Saudi public schools under the Ministry of Education. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across different regions and educational levels (Faradiba et al., 2024). The sample size was determined according to the statistical power required for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), ensuring sufficient reliability and validity in the analysis. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising three main constructs: (1) annual evaluations, (2) professional development, and (3) school administration performance. Each construct included several five-point Likert-scale items adapted from validated instruments used in previous studies on teacher appraisal and leadership development (Alshaikhi & Alshaikhi, 2021; Espinosa et al., 2023). Prior to the main data collection, the instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing to assess clarity, cultural appropriateness, and construct relevance to the Saudi educational context. Reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha coefficients, all of which exceeded the 0.70 threshold, confirming strong internal consistency (Maashi et al., 2022). Ethical procedures were rigorously observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality, consistent with educational research ethics in Saudi Arabia (Abohiamid, 2024).

Data analysis was conducted exclusively using Smart-PLS software, following the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. This method was selected for its robustness in handling complex models involving mediating variables and its suitability for moderate sample sizes (Kurteshi & Rrustemi, 2025; Wullschleger et al., 2025). The analysis proceeded in two phases: (1) evaluation of the measurement model to assess validity and reliability, and (2) testing of the structural model to examine hypothesized relationships among variables. This analytical framework ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the mediating effect of professional development on the relationship between annual evaluations and school administration performance, aligning with the broader goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasize continuous professional growth and leadership excellence in education (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Sahlin, 2025).

4. Findings

This section presents the results of the analysis conducted using Smart-PLS, examining the relationships among annual evaluations, professional development, and school administration performance. The findings provide empirical evidence supporting the study's hypotheses and highlight how evaluation systems and professional learning enhance leadership effectiveness in Saudi schools.

As shown in Table 1, the results of the reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicate excellent internal consistency across all constructs used in this study. The *Annual Evaluations* scale, which included 21 items, recorded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.940, demonstrating a high level of homogeneity among the items. Similarly, the *School Administration Performance* construct (31 items) achieved an alpha value of 0.960, while the *Professional Development* construct (22 items) also yielded 0.960, reflecting very strong reliability and internal stability across measure. These values substantially exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming that the instrument items effectively captured their respective constructs with consistency and precision. The results are consistent with prior educational leadership studies emphasizing the importance of reliable and valid measurement tools for evaluating performance management and professional growth.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Annual Evaluations	21	0.940
School Administration Performance	31	0.960
Professional Development	22	0.960

As shown in Table 2, the descriptive statistics summarize the participants' responses regarding the main study variables. The mean score for Annual Evaluations was 94.650 ($SD = 8.700$), indicating that school administrators generally perceived evaluation practices as effective and consistent across institutions. The School Administration Performance variable recorded a mean value of 141.100 ($SD = 12.464$), reflecting a high level of perceived leadership efficiency and management quality. Meanwhile, the Professional Development construct achieved a mean of 94.750 ($SD = 11.711$), suggesting that professional learning opportunities and developmental programs were positively viewed among

respondents. These results reveal consistently high mean scores across all variables, implying that evaluation systems and development initiatives play an influential role in enhancing administrative performance within Saudi schools. The moderate standard deviations show limited variability among participants' responses, indicating a shared agreement on the effectiveness of the practices being measured. These findings align with previous research emphasizing that systematic evaluations and targeted professional development significantly contribute to improved leadership performance and school outcomes (Espinosa et al., 2023; Sahlin, 2025; Türkoglu&Aypay, 2022). As reflected in Table 2, these descriptive patterns support the broader educational transformation goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which advocate for continuous improvement, accountability, and professional excellence in school administration.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Table

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Annual Evaluations	94.650	8.700	60
School Administration Performance	141.100	12.464	60
Professional Development	94.750	11.711	60

As shown in Table 3, the correlation matrix demonstrates strong and statistically significant positive relationships among the study's main variables at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). The correlation coefficient between Annual Evaluations and School Administration Performance was $r = 0.659$, $p = 0.000$, indicating that effective and consistent evaluation systems are strongly associated with higher levels of administrative performance. The relationship between Annual Evaluations and Professional Development was also significant ($r = 0.511$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that evaluation practices play a vital role in encouraging continuous learning and skill enhancement among school administrators. Furthermore, the correlation between Professional Development and School Administration Performance was $r = 0.580$, $p = 0.000$, confirming that professional growth directly contributes to improved leadership performance and institutional effectiveness. These findings empirically validate the hypothesized relationships and are consistent with earlier research that highlights the interconnected role of evaluation, development, and leadership in improving educational outcomes. The significant correlations at the 0.01 level confirm that

these relationships are statistically robust and meaningful, reflecting that effective evaluation systems and professional learning initiatives are crucial for enhancing school administration performance. The results also align with Goal-Setting Theory and Human Capital Theory, which suggest that feedback and developmental investment translate into better performance outcomes through motivation and skill-building (Maashi et al., 2022; OKOKOYO & Nwaham, 2024). Thus, as reflected in Table 3, the inter correlations among the three constructs support the study's conceptual framework and the broader objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasize accountability, continuous professional development, and excellence in educational leadership.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		Annual Evaluations	School Administration Performance	Professional Development
Annual Evaluations	Pearson Correlation	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
School Administration Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.659**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
Professional Development	Pearson Correlation	0.511**	0.580**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

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

5. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that annual evaluations significantly influence school administration performance in Saudi Arabia, both directly and indirectly through professional development. The strong positive correlations and reliability results provide empirical support for the hypothesized relationships, suggesting that structured evaluation systems play a vital role in enhancing leadership effectiveness,

accountability, and continuous improvement. These results align with Goal-Setting Theory, which emphasizes that performance feedback and clearly defined objectives increase motivation, effort, and goal achievement (Meyer et al., 2023; Türkoglu&Aypay, 2022). Administrators who receive regular evaluations are more likely to align their goals with institutional objectives, reflect on their performance, and adopt strategies for improvement. This connection reinforces the idea that evaluation systems in schools act as motivational tools that shape leadership behavior and performance outcomes, consistent with global educational management practices (Espinosa et al., 2023; DeWalt, 2024).

The significant relationship between annual evaluations and professional development further demonstrates the developmental purpose of performance appraisal. Based on Human Capital Theory, investment in skill enhancement and leadership training yields long-term organizational benefits by improving employees' knowledge, competencies, and innovation capacity (Maashi et al., 2022; OKOKOYO &Nwaham, 2024). The findings suggest that evaluation feedback serves as a foundation for identifying growth areas, prompting administrators to engage in targeted learning that enhances both individual and institutional performance. This outcome is consistent with the results of Sahlin (2025), who found that effective evaluation frameworks guide school leaders toward professional learning that fosters reflective practice and adaptive leadership. Similarly, Alwaely et al. (2023) reported that integrating performance assessment with training initiatives creates a sustainable culture of continuous improvement, aligning with Saudi Arabia's broader educational transformation goals under Vision 2030 (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020).

The findings also indicate that professional development serves as a significant mediator between evaluation and performance, highlighting its role as a bridge that transforms evaluative feedback into actionable leadership improvement. This outcome is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that leadership growth, when coupled with inspiration and intellectual stimulation, enhances organizational performance (Kang, 2021; Altassan, 2025). Administrators who engage in continuous professional learning develop the capacity to motivate their teams, encourage collaboration, and implement effective strategies for institutional growth. These findings are also consistent with Organizational Learning Theory, which views feedback and professional reflection as mechanisms for organizational adaptation and improvement (Gallagher, 2023; Wullschleger et al., 2025). The results show that

schools fostering professional learning environments are more likely to achieve sustainable improvements in administrative performance and overall institutional quality.

The high mean scores across all constructs further reflect that Saudi educational leaders perceive evaluation and professional development practices positively. This may be attributed to ongoing reforms by the Ministry of Education, which promote evaluation-based accountability and leadership excellence. Studies by Meyer et al. (2023) and Rakkrathok and Salamteh (2025) have similarly emphasized that transparent evaluation systems encourage good governance, enhance school culture, and improve administrative efficiency. Moreover, the strong reliability results confirm that the study's measures were appropriate for capturing the multidimensional nature of performance evaluation and leadership competence, supporting the methodological rigor of the findings (Maashi et al., 2022; Espinosa et al., 2023).

6. Conclusion:

This study examined the impact of annual evaluations on school administration performance in Saudi Arabia through the mediating role of professional development. The findings demonstrated that evaluation systems significantly enhance both professional growth and administrative performance, confirming the hypothesized relationships and supporting the theoretical framework of Goal-Setting Theory, Human Capital Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Organizational Learning Theory. The strong positive associations among the variables indicate that well-designed evaluation systems not only improve accountability but also foster a culture of continuous learning and leadership excellence.

The results emphasize that professional development serves as a critical bridge connecting evaluation feedback to tangible performance improvements. This reinforces the need for educational policymakers and school leaders in Saudi Arabia to integrate evaluation outcomes into structured development programs that strengthen administrative competence and institutional effectiveness. In alignment with Saudi Vision 2030, which prioritizes human capital investment and performance-based governance, the study concludes that evaluation and professional learning are mutually reinforcing mechanisms for advancing educational leadership and achieving sustainable school improvement. Ultimately, these findings highlight the importance of using performance

evaluations as developmental tools that inspire reflection, innovation, and continuous improvement within Saudi educational institutions.

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