

Exploring Teacher Leadership Styles in Guangxi Medical Universities: A

Student Perception Study Based on the CIP Model

Abstract

This study investigates the leadership styles of English teachers in medical universities in Guangxi, China, through the lens of the Charismatic–Ideological–Pragmatic (CIP) leadership model. Drawing on survey responses from 332 undergraduate students across three medical institutions, the study explores students' perceptions of their teachers' leadership behaviors and examines the influence of demographic variables such as gender and academic year. The findings reveal that charismatic and pragmatic leadership styles are perceived at consistently high levels, reflecting teachers' strengths in building trust, motivating learners, and facilitating critical thinking. In contrast, ideological leadership received moderately high ratings but showed greater variability. No significant gender differences were observed, but second-year students reported significantly more positive perceptions of teacher leadership than first-year students. The results highlight the dominant role of relational and practical leadership traits and the importance of promoting inclusive and adaptive leadership practices in specialized higher education contexts.

Keywords

Teacher leadership; charismatic leadership; pragmatic leadership; ideological leadership; medical universities; student perception.

Introduction

Teacher leadership, as a distinct dimension of educational leadership, has increasingly attracted attention within global educational research, particularly concerning its potential to enhance teaching effectiveness and institutional development (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Defined broadly as the set of practices through which teachers influence colleagues, shape educational outcomes, and participate in institutional decision-making beyond traditional instructional roles, teacher leadership has significant implications for educational quality and organizational culture (Harris, Jones, & Huffman, 2017).

In the context of Chinese higher education, recent educational reforms have amplified the expectations placed upon teachers, urging them to demonstrate

leadership beyond classroom teaching (Chen, Yin, & Li, 2020). Nevertheless, empirical investigations into the nature, extent, and characteristics of teacher leadership among English educators in specialized settings such as medical universities remain notably limited. Given the unique context of medical universities in Guangxi Province, which emphasize bilingual teaching, international academic exchanges, and the integration of specialized medical English curricula, understanding the leadership styles adopted by English teachers within these institutions is of significant academic and practical value (Xie, Wang, & Wang, 2025).

Previous studies have indicated that teacher leadership in Chinese universities often exhibits characteristics of transformational and distributed leadership styles, emphasizing collaboration, professional mentorship, and innovation (Cheng & Zhu, 2024). Transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and motivating colleagues and students towards achieving educational goals, has frequently been correlated with positive institutional climates and enhanced teaching outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). On the other hand, distributed leadership—where leadership tasks and responsibilities are shared among multiple faculty members—has been associated with increased teacher collaboration, job satisfaction, and improved organizational effectiveness in Chinese higher educational contexts (Han, Li, & Zhang, 2021).

Despite these insights, the specific characteristics of teacher leadership styles adopted by English language educators in medical universities in Guangxi have rarely been explicitly explored. Institutions such as Guangxi Medical University, Guilin Medical University, and Youjiang Medical University for Nationalities provide distinct settings where language instruction is closely intertwined with medical professional training. Understanding the prevalent leadership approaches in such contexts is essential, not only for enhancing teaching quality but also for promoting effective interdisciplinary collaboration and curriculum innovation in College English.

Thus, this study aims specifically to explore the current status of English teacher leadership styles within medical universities in Guangxi, China. Specifically, this study aims to answer two questions: 1. What is the level of perceived leadership styles of English teachers in higher education institutes in Guangxi? 2. Do demographic variables (gender, academic year) influence students' perception on leadership styles of English teachers in higher education institutes in Guangxi? By investigating the predominant leadership practices employed, this research will contribute to filling the existing knowledge gap and provide meaningful insights that may guide future professional development initiatives and institutional policy-making in the region.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition

Over the past two decades, teacher leadership has attracted considerable interest in educational research. However, despite growing attention, the concept remains relatively undeveloped in terms of clear definitions and operational clarity. One reason for this ambiguity is that teacher leadership serves as a broad, overarching term encompassing diverse roles teachers undertake (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, & Roberts, 2010). This study adopts a more specific definition offered by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009, p. 6), describing teacher leadership as “the practice by which teachers lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership.”

Leadership style describes the methods a leader uses to guide followers, make decisions, accomplish tasks, and influence team members (Newstrom & Davis, 1993). Effective leadership is essential for organizational success since it helps reduce employee turnover, improves team performance, and fosters cohesion toward organizational objectives (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Bass and Bass (2009) identified four key classifications of leadership styles: autocratic versus democratic, directive versus participative, task-oriented versus relationship-oriented, and initiating structure versus consideration, alongside laissez-faire versus motivated leadership. Specifically, autocratic-authoritarian leadership emphasizes decision-making power and personal benefit, whereas participative versus directive leadership focuses more on how decisions are reached. Relationship-oriented versus task-oriented leadership examines whose interests are prioritized, while initiation versus consideration addresses the structuring of tasks, goals, and relationships. Finally, laissez-faire versus motivated leadership differentiates between leaders who avoid responsibility and those who actively embrace leadership roles.

This study investigates teacher leadership styles based on the general theory of leadership but applies it explicitly to educational settings. A review of existing literature indicates no consensus or fixed pattern regarding teacher leadership styles. Instead, scholars frequently borrow general organizational leadership frameworks to interpret teacher leadership behaviors, primarily because the concept of teacher leadership style has roots in the broader field of leadership studies (Yang & Dong, 2017).

2.2 Theoretical Model

The CIP model of leadership stems from Weber’s early ideas on leadership styles (Hunter et al., 2011). Weber (1924) outlined three fundamental types of authority: traditional, rational (or legal), and charismatic. Traditional leadership emphasizes core values such as customs, heritage, and family, aiming to maintain social stability.

Rational leadership, often linked with legal authority, is grounded in logic and impartiality, especially within bureaucratic systems. Charismatic leadership, in contrast, focuses on leaders who inspire change by deeply influencing their followers' personal beliefs and behaviors.

In the early 21st century, Mumford and his colleagues (e.g., Bedell-Avers, Hunter, & Mumford, 2009; Mumford, 2006) built on Weber's framework and introduced the CIP model—a more refined perspective on leadership that emphasizes how leaders respond during crises. This model suggests that effective leadership involves creating a cognitive framework or sense-making structure to guide behavior. It identifies three distinct leadership styles that exceptional leaders often adopt: charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic.

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leaders use emotionally charged, forward-looking visions to motivate followers by promising a better future if collective goals are achieved (Mumford et al., 2006). They rely heavily on shared experiences and a shared sense of purpose to guide their group through challenges (Bedell et al., 2006). A core element of their strategy is building a collective identity, which creates social pressure for followers to align with the leader's vision. At the same time, these leaders grant followers autonomy, which instills hope and makes them more receptive to influence (Lovelace et al., 2019).

Although the term “charismatic leadership” appears in both the CIP model and traditional charismatic/transformational leadership theories, their meanings diverge. Both emphasize vision, mission, and transformational goals, but the CIP version puts greater emphasis on how followers operationalize the leader's vision (Lovelace et al., 2019). Furthermore, while traditional theories often treat vision and outcomes as inseparable, the CIP model clearly outlines how leaders' behaviors causally lead to outcomes (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Lovelace et al., 2019).

Ideological Leadership

Like charismatic leadership, ideological leadership is based on vision. However, rather than focusing on the future, it draws strength from a shared belief system rooted in the past (Hunter et al., 2009). These leaders build a loyal, value-driven base, uniting members through collective commitment to specific ideals (Bedell-Avers et al., 2008). Group members are guided by these shared values, which help them determine how best to contribute to the vision (Lovelace et al., 2019). Ideological leaders are often steadfast in their beliefs, enforcing group boundaries and establishing trust through consistent character and dedication (Mumford, 2006).

Pragmatic Leadership

In contrast to the vision-driven approaches of charismatic and ideological leaders, pragmatic leaders are more focused on addressing immediate issues. They influence others by identifying practical solutions and leveraging their deep understanding of social dynamics (Lovelace & Hunter, 2013; Mumford & Van Doorn, 2001). These leaders communicate clearly and rationally with their teams to build support, often

collaborating with high-performing individuals whose expertise can directly solve core problems (Mumford et al., 2008). By giving followers autonomy to act on these problems, pragmatic leaders encourage initiative and performance (Hunter et al., 2011).

2.3 Current Research on the Teacher Leadership Style

A review of the literature indicated that teachers from different backgrounds practice different leadership styles. For instance, Morsidi, Sian, Shahrill, and Abdullah (2016) found that the autocratic leadership style became the dominant leadership style among mathematics teachers and was then followed by democratic, laissez-faire. Despite the participants are mathematics teachers, Tsang, Finti, & Shahrill (2014) achieve different results from the above research. Over half of the mathematics teachers practiced democratic leadership style, followed by automatic leadership style and autocratic & democratic leadership style; however, none of the mathematics teachers practiced Laissez-faire leadership. This is echoed by the research of Okoroji, Anyanwu, and Ukpere (2014), which revealed that the democratic leadership style was the dominant leadership style practiced by secondary school teachers in Nigeria. A recent study also indicated that most teachers believe that they practice participative leadership style, followed by compromise style and indifferent style (Sfakianaki, Matsiori, Giannias, & Sevdali, 2018). Similarly, Thailand college teachers were perceived to practice more people-oriented leadership styles than task-oriented leadership styles (Seritanondh, 2013). Notably, students held the opinion that people-oriented teachers had fairly strong qualities of a leader.

Unlike the aforementioned findings, Romania teachers found most manifested authoritarian leadership style followed by democratic/participative leadership style, indulgent leadership style, passive leadership style, and median leadership style (Bota & Tulbure, 2017). Further on, the democratic/participative style was the most efficient and productive leadership style in the classroom setting. That is to say, teachers who focused on both the efficient accomplishment of learning objectives and development of competencies (tasks-oriented) and creating a high-quality and stable academic climate via the development of interpersonal relationships (people-oriented) will bring about pupils' superior academic performances. Moreover, authoritarian and median styles were also found to be productive compared to the passive and the indulgent styles.

Apart from the leadership style that teachers adopt to lead others, researchers also investigated the demographic factors associated with the leadership style that teachers chose. Related factors can be found in gender, age, the years in management positions (Sfakianaki et al., 2018), time allocated for teaching, teaching experience (Morsidi, Sian, Shahrill, & Abdullah, 2016), and school unit type (Sfakianaki et al., 2018). That's to say, female teachers were more likely to adopt a participatory leadership style. Younger teachers practice compromise, participative and humanitarian teacher leadership styles more frequently than older teachers. The more years teachers served in management, the more likely they are to adopt the participative and democratic

leadership style (Sfakianaki et al., 2018). It was also found that time allocated for teaching in school was positively related to autocratic leadership style while negatively related to democratic leadership style; teaching experience was positively associated with autocratic leadership style. This indicated that mathematics teachers who had more hours allocated for teaching in school and had more teaching experience tended to practice autocratic leadership. In contrast, teachers who had fewer hours allocated for teaching in school and had more years of experience in administrative positions tended to practice a democratic leadership style (Morsidi et al., 2016). Additionally, Sfakianaki et al. (2018) also found that teacher leadership style is also related to school unit type. More specifically, High School and EPAL teachers had a higher rate of indifferent teacher style than Lyceum teachers.

However, no relation was found between teacher leadership style and teacher's profession, qualifications they held, management training they attend (Sfakianaki et al., 2018), and school performance (Souza & Batista, 2018). Nevertheless, teachers in the group with lower school performance tend to apply greater coercive control than the group with high school performance (Souza & Batista, 2018).

Upon reviewing the literature on the status quo of teacher leadership style, the researcher found that most of the research was conducted in K-12 education; less information was provided in the context of higher education. Moreover, past studies do not reveal which teacher leadership style can facilitate student learning (Morsidi et al., 2016), nor do they provide sufficient information on which teacher leadership style is more effective in improving student learning.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Participants

This study involved 332 EFL undergraduate students from three universities in Guangxi, with 204 female and 128 male participants. Their average age was 19.4 years, and they were distributed across academic years, with 139 in their first year and 193 in their second year.

3.2 Instrument

Teacher leadership style was measured by Teacher Leadership Style Scale which was developed by Tsai (2017) based on the following three dimensions of the CIP model of leadership (Bedell-Avers, Hunter, Angie, Eubanks, & Mumford, 2009; Mumford, Antes, Caughron, & Friedrich, 2008): charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic. Charismatic leaders express their ideas to their followers in a visionbased manner by promising a better future if they commit to achieving the goals (Mumford, Scott, & Hunter, 2006). Ideological leadership refers to guiding and influencing others through the promotion and embodiment of a set of beliefs, values, or ideals to inspire

alignment and commitment to a shared vision. Pragmatic leadership focuses on practical, results-oriented decision-making and problem-solving, emphasizing adaptability, efficiency, and achieving tangible outcomes over adherence to rigid principles or ideologies.

In the confirmative factor analysis, item TLS 19 and item was deleted for its factor loading=0.272. The three dimensions, namely, charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic, recorded reliability scores of 0.973, 0.732, and 0.951, respectively. What's more, all items demonstrated factor loadings exceeding 0.608, with an average variance extracted value surpassing 0.5, while the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio, not exceeding 1, further confirmed both convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019).

4. Result of the Study

In this study, the levels of practice were assessed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. The mean value between 1-3.00 is considered a “low” level of practice, while the mean values between 3.01-5.00 and 5.01-7.00 are considered “moderate” and “high” levels of practice, respectively.

4.1 Charismatic Leadership Style

Table 1 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Charismatic Leadership Style

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
TLS1	The interaction between my teacher and us in the classroom is good.	5.83	1.114	High
TLS2	My teacher has a fine sense of humor.	5.89	1.066	High
TLS3	I respect the behavior of my teacher.	5.89	1.109	High
TLS4	It is pleasure to get along with my teacher.	5.90	1.130	High
TLS5	My teacher is concerned about the vulnerable students in my class.	5.48	1.299	High
TLS6	My teacher is actively concerned about students' problems and listens to them.	5.79	1.140	High
TLS7	My teacher discusses positive things with us, such as future dreams.	5.75	1.097	High
TLS8	My teacher often encourages us to think about the future and prepare for it.	5.79	1.084	High
TLS9	My teacher often expresses high expectations for our work with other students.	5.53	1.213	High
TLS10	There is an atmosphere of caring and trust in teacher–student relationships.	5.73	1.117	High

TLS11	My teacher discusses important issues with us in order to arrive at a solution.	5.70	1.114	High
TLS12	My teacher specifically tells us what achievements we can attain and believes that we can succeed.	5.63	1.150	High
TLS17	When solving problems, my teacher stresses different solutions according to our different characteristics.	5.52	1.228	High
TLS25	I feel that my teacher is willing to provide useful assistance to my classmates to help them solve problems.	5.79	1.105	High
Overall		5.73	1.140	High

The analysis of Table .1 demonstrates a high overall perception of the charismatic leadership style, as indicated by an average mean score of 5.73 and a standard deviation of 1.140. The highest-rated item, TLS4 (It is a pleasure to get along with my teacher), with a mean of 5.90, highlights the strong rapport and positive teacher-student interactions. Similarly, TLS2 (My teacher has a fine sense of humor) and TLS3 (I respect the behavior of my teacher), both with a mean of 5.89, reinforce the teacher's ability to create an engaging and respectful classroom atmosphere. Items addressing the teacher's engagement with students' future aspirations, such as TLS8 (My teacher often encourages us to think about the future and prepare for it) and TLS7 (My teacher discusses positive things with us, such as future dreams), both scoring 5.79, reflect the teacher's motivational influence and forward-thinking guidance.

However, some areas show comparatively lower scores. TLS5 (My teacher is concerned about the vulnerable students in my class), with a mean of 5.48, and TLS17 (When solving problems, my teacher stresses different solutions according to our different characteristics), scoring 5.52, suggest room for growth in addressing the unique needs of individual students and providing more tailored support. Similarly, TLS9 (My teacher often expresses high expectations for our work with other students), with a mean of 5.53, indicates a potential area for improvement in setting and communicating collaborative expectations.

Despite these areas, the overall high scores across all items emphasize the teacher's ability to foster an environment characterized by trust, care, and encouragement, as seen in TLS10 (There is an atmosphere of caring and trust in teacher–student relationships), with a mean of 5.73, and TLS6 (My teacher is actively concerned about students' problems and listens to them), scoring 5.79. The relatively consistent standard deviations (ranging from 1.066 to 1.299) suggest that students generally agree on their positive perceptions of the teacher's leadership style.

4.2 Pragmatic Leadership Style

Table 2 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Pragmatic Leadership Style

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
TLS13	My teacher uses negative examples from the past as important lessons during our discussions.	5.42	1.285	High
TLS14	My teacher inspires us to learn.	5.87	1.060	High
TLS15	My teacher encourages collaborative teamwork for the purposes of discussing and solving problems.	5.34	1.393	High
TLS16	When we have group discussions, my teacher encourages us to share our thoughts.	5.55	1.239	High
TLS18	When dealing with issues related to our class, my teacher considers individual differences among the students.	5.53	1.232	High
TLS21	My teacher discusses all kinds of phenomena in society.	5.39	1.257	High
TLS22	My teacher encourages us to consider issues from a variety of viewpoints.	5.70	1.076	High
TLS23	My teacher encourages us to consider issues from a variety of viewpoints.	5.75	1.065	High
TLS24	My teacher expects us to constantly improve our level of professionalism.	5.68	1.085	High
TLS26	My teacher likes to discuss things pragmatically.	5.69	1.062	High
TLS27	When we discuss a topic, my teacher helps us to understand its complexity, viewing it from two perspectives: people and systems.	5.63	1.144	High
Overall	332	5.60	1.173	High

The analysis of Table .1 highlights a high overall perception of pragmatic leadership style, with an average mean score of 5.60 and a standard deviation of 1.173. Among the items, TLS14 (My teacher inspires us to learn) received the highest mean score of 5.87, reflecting the teacher's strong ability to motivate and inspire students. Similarly, TLS23 (My teacher encourages us to consider issues from a variety of viewpoints) scored 5.75, and TLS22 (My teacher encourages us to consider issues from a variety of viewpoints) scored 5.70, showcasing the teacher's effectiveness in promoting critical thinking and diverse perspectives.

Items with comparatively lower scores, such as TLS15 (My teacher encourages collaborative teamwork for the purposes of discussing and solving problems) with a mean of 5.34, and TLS21 (My teacher discusses all kinds of phenomena in society) with a mean of 5.39, indicate potential areas for improvement in fostering collaborative problem-solving and integrating broader societal discussions into the learning environment. TLS13 (My teacher uses negative examples from the past as

important lessons during our discussions), scoring 5.42, also suggests that leveraging past experiences as teaching tools could be further emphasized.

The standard deviations across items, ranging from 1.060 to 1.393, indicate moderate variability in student perceptions. This suggests that while the overall perception is high, individual experiences with the teacher's pragmatic leadership traits may vary. Strengths are evident in items like TLS26 (My teacher likes to discuss things pragmatically) with a mean of 5.69 and TLS27 (When we discuss a topic, my teacher helps us to understand its complexity, viewing it from two perspectives: people and systems) with a mean of 5.63, highlighting the teacher's structured and realistic approach to discussions.

4.3 Ideological Leadership Style

Table .3 Descriptive Results of Each Item of Ideological Leadership Style

Item No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
TLS20	My teacher often discusses things with certain groups of students after class.	4.98	1.419	Moderate
TLS28	I feel that my teacher prefers to assign learning opportunities to the good students.	5.18	1.431	High
TLS29	I feel that the good students in my class comply with and support the teacher's guidance and suggestions.	5.32	1.338	High
Overall		5.16	1.396	High

The analysis of Table 1 reveals a high overall perception of the pragmatic leadership style in this subset of items, with an average mean score of 5.16 and a standard deviation of 1.396. Among the items, TLS29 (I feel that the good students in my class comply with and support the teacher's guidance and suggestions) received the highest score (5.32), reflecting that students perceive good students as supportive of the teacher's guidance. Similarly, TLS28 (I feel that my teacher prefers to assign learning opportunities to the good students) scored 5.18, indicating a perception that learning opportunities are more frequently assigned to high-performing students, which aligns with a high level of pragmatic leadership.

Conversely, TLS20 (My teacher often discusses things with certain groups of students after class) scored 4.98, also at a moderate level, suggesting that students feel the teacher engages in additional discussions with specific groups but not uniformly across the class.

The relatively high variability in responses, as indicated by the standard deviations ranging from 1.338 to 1.623, suggests differing student perceptions of the teacher's pragmatic leadership. While high-performing students are perceived to receive more attention and opportunities, this could lead to feelings of disparity among the broader class.

4.4 Demographic Differences in Teacher Leadership Style

To investigate whether students perception on teacher leadership style vary in accordance with their gender and academic year, independent sample t-test was conducted. Table 4 and 5 depicted the results of the t-test results

Table .4 Gender Differences in Perceived Teacher Leadership Style

Variable	Case	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Gender				0.662	0.508
Male	128	5.4717	0.92329		
Female	204	5.4067	0.83552		

Table 4 presents the analysis of gender differences in students' perceptions of teacher leadership style. The mean scores indicate that male students (Mean = 5.4717, SD = 0.92329) rate their teacher's leadership slightly higher than female students (Mean = 5.4067, SD = 0.83552). However, the difference between the two groups is minimal.

A t-test was conducted to determine whether the observed difference in mean scores is statistically significant. The results show a t-value of 0.662 and a p-value of 0.508, indicating that the difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This implies that there is no evidence to suggest that gender plays a meaningful role in how students perceive their teacher's leadership style.

Table .5 Academic Year Differences in in Perceived Teacher Leadership Style

Variable	Case	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Academic Year				-3.192	0.002
Year 1	128	5.25496	0.85241		
Year 2	204	5.55907	0.8617		

Table 5 examines the differences in perceived teacher leadership style between first-year (Year 1) and second-year (Year 2) students. The mean score for Year 1 students is 5.25496 (SD = 0.85241), while the mean score for Year 2 students is higher at 5.55907 (SD = 0.8617), indicating that second-year students perceive their teacher's leadership style more positively than first-year students.

A t-test was conducted to assess the statistical significance of this difference. The results show a t-value of -3.192 and a p-value of 0.002. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the difference in perceived teacher leadership style between Year 1 and Year 2 students is statistically significant.

5.Discussion

5.1 Comparison with Previous Research on Teacher Leadership Styles

This study examined students' perceptions of teacher leadership styles among

English educators in medical universities in Guangxi. The results showed that charismatic and pragmatic leadership styles were perceived at consistently high levels, while ideological leadership received moderately high but more variable ratings.

In earlier studies conducted in primary and secondary settings across various countries, teacher leadership styles varied significantly. For example, Morsidi et al. (2016) and Bota and Tulbure (2017) found that authoritarian or autocratic leadership styles were commonly practiced by teachers, particularly in mathematics. However, this study did not reflect such patterns. Instead, English teachers were perceived as approachable, supportive, and forward-looking, which aligns more closely with charismatic leadership as defined in the CIP model. This difference may be attributed to the interdisciplinary and communicative nature of English teaching, which places greater emphasis on relational and motivational teaching approaches.

Likewise, findings from countries like Thailand (Seritanondh, 2013) and Nigeria (Okoroji et al., 2014) have highlighted the dominance of people-oriented or democratic leadership styles, which share similarities with charismatic leadership. Yet, by adopting the CIP framework, this study offers a more detailed and theoretically grounded understanding of these leadership dimensions. Rather than simply labeling leadership as "democratic" or "authoritarian," the CIP model distinguishes how leaders influence through vision, values, or practicality, and provides richer insight into teacher behavior.

The high ratings for pragmatic leadership—especially in items related to real-world application, encouraging diverse viewpoints, and critical thinking—are consistent with studies like Sfakianaki et al. (2018), which found participative styles to be effective in promoting professional learning environments. In the context of medical universities, such traits are essential for helping students navigate complex, interdisciplinary content. Unlike previous reports that identified passive or laissez-faire styles in some settings (Bota & Tulbure, 2017), students in this study overwhelmingly perceived their teachers as engaged and proactive in guiding learning.

While ideological leadership received a generally high mean score, responses varied more than in the other two dimensions. This variability likely reflects the selective nature of ideological leadership. Students agreed that high-performing peers received more guidance and opportunities, which may indicate a value-based approach by teachers. However, this can also lead to perceptions of unequal treatment, especially among average-performing students. As noted by Bedell-Avers et al. (2009), ideological leaders often appeal strongly to a specific group of followers who align with their beliefs, rather than engaging all students equally. This finding suggests the need for ideological approaches to be balanced with inclusive practices.

5.2 The Role of Student Demographics

The demographic analysis revealed no significant gender differences in how students perceived their teachers' leadership styles. This is consistent with findings from Sfakianaki et al. (2018), who also found minimal gender-related variation in

leadership perception.

However, a significant difference was found between academic years: second-year students rated their teachers' leadership more positively than first-year students. This could be explained by increased exposure to teachers, greater maturity, or stronger teacher-student relationships built over time. It also suggests that the impact of certain leadership traits—especially charismatic and pragmatic ones—may become more evident as students progress through their academic programs.

5.3 Implications for Practice and Research

These findings highlight that teacher leadership in the context of Chinese medical universities is both prevalent and multi-faceted. The dominance of charismatic and pragmatic traits suggests that effective English teachers in these institutions tend to inspire students while also offering practical, problem-solving guidance.

For teacher development, this implies a need to strengthen professional training in areas such as interpersonal communication, motivational techniques, and contextual decision-making. At the same time, caution should be taken with ideological leadership, ensuring that belief-driven practices do not alienate less high-performing students.

From a research perspective, this study adds to the relatively limited body of work on teacher leadership in higher education, particularly in the Chinese context. The use of the CIP model provides a theoretically robust lens for understanding leadership in instructional settings. Future studies could build on this by incorporating teacher self-assessments, peer evaluations, or longitudinal data to explore how these leadership styles evolve over time.

5.4 Limitation

Despite offering useful insights into English teacher leadership styles in Guangxi's medical universities, this study has several limitations. First, the findings are based on data from only three institutions within a single province, which may limit their generalizability to other regions or disciplines. Second, the study relied solely on student perceptions, which, while valuable, may not fully capture the complexity of teacher leadership; incorporating perspectives from teachers themselves or colleagues could provide a more balanced view. Additionally, the cross-sectional design offers only a snapshot in time, making it difficult to assess how perceptions of leadership might evolve across academic years. The study's disciplinary context—College English—may also influence the observed leadership behaviors, meaning the results might not apply to general English instruction or non-medical settings. Finally, while the CIP-based Teacher Leadership Style Scale used here proved reliable, it may not encompass other important leadership constructs such as distributed or transformational leadership, which could be explored in future research.

Conclusion

This study explored students' perceptions of English teacher leadership styles in medical universities in Guangxi, focusing on three dimensions derived from the CIP model: charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leadership. The findings revealed that charismatic and pragmatic leadership styles were highly perceived by students, suggesting that English teachers in this context are effective in building trust, inspiring learners, and promoting practical, real-world thinking. Ideological leadership was also present but showed greater variability, indicating that value-driven teaching may resonate more with select groups of students. Additionally, while gender did not significantly influence perceptions, academic year did—highlighting the potential cumulative effect of teacher-student interaction over time. These results offer valuable implications for enhancing teacher professional development, where emotional engagement and pragmatic decision-making are both essential. By shedding light on how students interpret teacher leadership behaviors, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of instructional leadership in higher education and underscores the importance of fostering diverse, inclusive, and adaptive leadership practices in specialized learning environments.

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