

Beyond Borders: Leadership and Grit in the Lives of Migrant Teachers

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Growing teacher mobility has expanded the international school sector, creating a diverse workforce of migrant educators who often navigate unfamiliar cultural, professional, and organisational environments. This study investigates how perceived school leadership influences the grit and job satisfaction of international migrant teachers, and whether grit serves as a mediating mechanism in this relationship. Drawing on the Human Relations perspective, which emphasises the role of supportive social contexts in fostering motivation and well-being, the study employed an exploratory quantitative design. Data were collected from 103 migrant teachers working across multiple international school systems using validated measures of leadership, grit, and job satisfaction. Correlation and mediation analyses revealed that supportive leadership was positively associated with both grit and job satisfaction. Grit partially mediated the leadership-job satisfaction link, indicating that leadership not only improves workplace satisfaction directly but also does so indirectly by strengthening teachers' perseverance and commitment to long-term goals. These findings highlight the importance of relational, inclusive leadership practices in fostering resilience and fulfilment among globally mobile educators. The study provides theoretical and practical insights for international schools aiming to improve teacher well-being, motivation, and retention.

Keywords: *international migrant teacher, grit, job satisfaction, human relations theory, international schools, leadership*

Introduction

Teacher mobility has expanded the international school sector, creating a growing population of migrant teachers who work across diverse national and cultural contexts. International school systems are educational institutions that offer globally recognised curricula—such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International Examinations, or American/UK-based programmes—and employ a multinational teaching staff while serving culturally diverse student bodies (Bunnell 2019, Lee and Park 2025). Migrant teachers bring valuable pedagogical expertise to host schools but also face transition-related challenges, such as cultural adjustment, differences in professional accreditation, and pedagogical reorientation, which can impact their retention and performance (Ennerberg and Economou 2021, Mizzi 2021).

At the same time, school leadership has been repeatedly linked to teacher outcomes such as motivation, job satisfaction, and retention (Grissom et al. 2021). However, less is known about how leadership influences non-cognitive traits such as grit—defined by

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Duckworth et al. (2007) as perseverance and passion for long-term goals—and how these traits, in turn, affect job satisfaction among migrant teachers working in international school contexts.

This paper, therefore, investigates the perceived influence of school leadership on teachers' grit and job satisfaction in international school settings and examines whether grit mediates the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. This approach is consistent with leadership literature that views leaders as contextual actors who shape the climate, support, and working conditions that influence individual differences and attitudes. The study employs an exploratory quantitative design to investigate the perceived relationships among leadership, grit, and job satisfaction in a global sample of international migrant teachers.

The aim of this study is to determine the perceived influence of school leadership on (a) grit and (b) job satisfaction of international migrant teachers, and (c) whether grit mediates the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. The paper is structured as follows: the first section provides the introduction, outlining the background, research problem, and aims of the study. The second section presents an up-to-date literature review, drawing on recent theoretical and empirical studies that inform the conceptual framework. The third section explains the research methodology and presents the findings of the quantitative analysis. The fourth section offers a discussion of the results in relation to existing literature and practical implications. Finally, the last section concludes the paper by summarising the main findings, highlighting contributions to the field, and providing recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: The Human Relations Perspective

This study draws on Elton Mayo's Human Relations perspective (Mayo 1953) as its central theoretical framework. Mayo's work shifted organisational thought from mechanistic models to an appreciation of the social and psychological dimensions of work. The theory emphasises that attention to employee needs, supportive interpersonal relationships, recognition, and opportunities for participation strongly influence motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Within this framework, leadership is conceptualised as a social process that shapes the immediate work environment through communication, support, trust, and vision.

Applying this perspective to education, school leaders act as contextual agents who create environments that foster a sense of belonging, psychosocial safety, and professional growth. These conditions not only promote teacher satisfaction but may also strengthen persistence and passion toward long-term professional goals—qualities aligned with the construct of grit. Thus, the Human Relations approach supports examining leadership as the contextual factor (X) that influences individual motivation and outcomes, with grit as a mediating mechanism (M) and job satisfaction as the dependent variable (Y).

This framework has gained renewed relevance in educational research, which links supportive leadership with teacher motivation, resilience, and retention (Kaya et al.

2024, He 2023). It provides a coherent lens through which to interpret how leadership behaviours foster psychological resources such as grit and, in turn, shape job satisfaction—especially within multicultural and international school environments.

Migration and International School Contexts

Teacher mobility has expanded significantly in recent decades, leading to a growing workforce of migrant educators employed in international school systems. These schools typically serve multinational student bodies and follow globally recognised curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge International Examinations (Bunnell 2019, Lee and Park 2025).

While international teachers contribute diverse pedagogical and cultural knowledge, they often face professional and social challenges, including differences in accreditation, teaching standards, and cultural adaptation (Ennerberg and Economou 2021, Mizzi 2021). Derrah (2024) highlights that school-level support—such as mentorship and inclusive leadership—plays a pivotal role in helping migrant teachers integrate successfully and maintain job satisfaction.

Within Mayo's Human Relations framework, leadership that recognises teachers' emotional and social needs can mitigate the stressors of migration and adjustment. Leadership in international schools thus becomes not only an administrative function but also a relational and cultural practice that influences teacher motivation, resilience, and retention (Manogaran and Abdul-Wahab 2024).

Grit in Educational Contexts

Grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al. 2007), has gained prominence as a non-cognitive predictor of success in education. Empirical studies have linked teacher grit to persistence, professional resilience, and well-being (He 2023, Zhang 2023). Teachers with higher grit levels tend to demonstrate greater emotional stability and satisfaction, even in challenging conditions (Ismail 2023, Lee 2024).

However, research focusing on grit among international or migrant teachers remains limited. Most existing studies examine grit among pre-service or English as a Foreign Language teachers in domestic contexts (Fan et al. 2024, Yang 2024). This gap underscores the need for exploratory quantitative studies that examine how leadership climates in international schools influence grit, and in turn, impact job satisfaction and retention.

Integrating grit into leadership research offers a deeper understanding of how contextual and personal factors interact to shape teacher outcomes.

Leadership and Teacher Outcomes

School leadership is one of the most consistent predictors of teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and retention. Transformational and supportive leadership styles that prioritise communication, trust, and professional growth are associated with higher engagement and lower turnover (Grissom et al. 2021, Kaya et al. 2024).

In international schools, the importance of leadership is amplified due to cultural and curricular diversity. Leaders who articulate a clear vision, offer professional development, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity foster a sense of inclusion and belonging among migrant staff (Derrah 2024). This relational view of leadership echoes Mayo's premise that the quality of interpersonal relations and emotional support is central to organisational effectiveness.

Leadership, therefore, functions both as a contextual factor shaping teachers' immediate experiences and as a mechanism that cultivates psychological resources such as grit.

Interplay between Leadership, Grit, and Job Satisfaction

Emerging evidence suggests that leadership can influence non-cognitive attributes such as persistence, resilience, and grit. Supportive leadership has been shown to cultivate perseverance and optimism by fostering emotionally safe and motivating environments (Rego et al. 2021, Caza and Posner 2019). Grit, in turn, has been positively linked to job satisfaction across various teacher populations (Gustari and Widodo 2021).

Synthesising these strands, the conceptual model guiding this study posits that leadership directly enhances job satisfaction while also indirectly influencing it through its effect on grit. In this framework, grit operates as a mediating mechanism that channels the positive effects of leadership into greater motivation and professional fulfilment.

This integrated view aligns with the Human Relations theory and contributes new insights by examining these relationships within the underexplored context of international migrant teachers in global school systems.

Research Methodology

This study adopted an explanatory quantitative research design within a positivist paradigm. The positivist approach assumes that relationships between variables can be observed and measured objectively through empirical data (Creswell and Creswell 2023). The explanatory design was chosen because the study sought to examine the predictive and mediating relationships among measurable constructs—perceived leadership, grit, and job satisfaction—rather than exploring subjective meanings or lived experiences. Quantitative designs are appropriate when testing theoretical models and analysing the strength and direction of relationships between variables using statistical techniques (Saunders et al. 2019, Adams and Lawrence 2021).

This design aligns with the study's conceptual framework, which posits that perceived leadership (independent variable) influences grit (mediator), which in turn influences job satisfaction (dependent variable).

Study Population and Sample

The study population comprised international migrant teachers currently employed at international schools across various countries. These teachers were selected because they work in multicultural educational environments that heavily depend on leadership quality to support professional and personal growth. A homogeneous purposive sampling strategy was used to identify participants who share the defining characteristic of being international migrant teachers (Palinkas et al. 2015). Data were collected online through a structured questionnaire distributed via professional networks, educational platforms, and social media groups for international educators. The sample size was determined using the G*Power 3.1 statistical tool to ensure adequate statistical power (Faul et al. 2009). A minimum of 150 responses was required to detect medium effect sizes at a power level of 0.80 and $\alpha = 0.05$.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using an online questionnaire consisting of four sections: demographic information and three validated measurement scales. Perceived Leadership was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) developed by Bass and Avolio (1995). The MLQ assesses transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership dimensions. Grit was measured using the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) developed by Duckworth and Quinn (2009). Job Satisfaction by using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector (1985). All questionnaires employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All instruments have been widely validated in educational research and have demonstrated reliability coefficients above 0.70 in prior studies (He 2023, Kaya et al. 2024). The questionnaire was adapted slightly to reflect the international school context.

After obtaining ethics clearance from the Tshwane University of Technology Faculty Research Ethics Committee, data were collected via an online survey distributed through Google Forms. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and informed that participation was voluntary. Consent was obtained electronically before completing the survey. The data collection period spanned six weeks, during which reminder emails were sent to enhance response rates.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 29). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were used to summarise demographic data. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to explore bivariate relationships among perceived leadership, grit, and job satisfaction. To test the proposed mediation model, Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) was employed (Hayes 2022). Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. Reliability of all measurement instruments was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients above the 0.70 threshold (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994).

The study adhered to established principles of ethical research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed; no identifying information was collected or disclosed. Data were securely stored on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher. Ethical approval was obtained from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) Faculty Committee for Research Ethics prior to data collection.

The purpose of this analysis was to examine the perceived influence of school leadership on grit and job satisfaction among international migrant teachers and to test whether grit mediates the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. Statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS/SmartPLS. Descriptive statistics summarised demographic data and key study variables, while inferential statistics tested the proposed relationships. Mediation analysis was performed using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Hayes 2022).

Results

A homogeneous purposive sample of 103 respondents completed the online survey. Participants were professionals working in international schools following a globally recognised curriculum, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge International Examinations, who were directly involved in teaching or classroom-related activities. The inclusion criteria reflected the study's focus on understanding how school leadership influences the grit and job satisfaction of teaching professionals. Therefore, the sample included teachers ($\approx 73.8\%$), teacher assistants ($\approx 3.9\%$), and management staff with teaching duties ($\approx 11.7\%$), as these groups operate under similar leadership structures and experience comparable instructional demands. A smaller group of management staff without classroom duties ($\approx 6.8\%$) was retained because their perceptions of leadership and job satisfaction remain integral to the organisational teaching environment and contribute to understanding leadership's wider influence within international schools.

Most respondents (44.7%) were between 18 and 35 years of age; 36.9% of the respondents were between 36 and 45 years old, while 18.4% were older than 48 years. The respondents' qualifications were as follows: 33.95% of respondents had a master's degree, while 24.25% had a bachelor's degree. A further 8.37% had a Bachelor of Education degree, 8.37% had a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), and 7.76% had an honours qualification. The majority (36.89%) reported having taught between 11 and 20 years, while 27.18% had taught for 1 to 5 years and 17.48% for 6 to 10 years. Overall, the majority of the participants had between 1 and 20 years of service in education.

Respondents were employed in multiple countries—predominantly Sweden (45.63%), South Africa (12.62%), Italy (9.7%), the USA (4.85%), China (2.91%); other countries with less than 2.5% responses were Belgium, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lithuania, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam—ensuring that the findings

reflect diverse international school contexts while remaining focused on teaching-related experiences consistent with the study's aims.

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Following Barbera et al. (2020), alpha values ≥ 0.70 indicate acceptable internal reliability. As shown in Table 1, all scales exceeded this threshold, indicating strong internal consistency.

Table 1. Reliability of Scales (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Rounded Alpha	Interpretation
Leadership	0.8041	0.80	High reliability
Grit	0.6836	0.70	Acceptable reliability
Job Satisfaction	0.8681	0.87	High reliability

Source: Authors 2024

The mean and standard deviation for each continuous variable are reported in Table 2. Participants reported moderate grit levels ($M = 25$, $SD = 3.70$), moderate-to-high leadership perceptions ($M = 51$, $SD = 6.30$), and moderate job satisfaction ($M = 42$, $SD = 5.90$).

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Suggestion
Grit	25	3.70	Moderate	Perseverance and passion for a long-term goal
Leadership	51	6.30	Moderate-High	Leadership capability varies more widely across participants
Job Satisfaction	42	5.90	Moderate	Employees may be very satisfied, while others are less satisfied

Source: Authors 2024

Bivariate correlation analysis indicated significant positive associations among leadership, grit, and job satisfaction (r values between 0.45 and 0.75, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that stronger perceptions of supportive leadership are associated with higher levels of grit and satisfaction. This aligns with the Human Relations perspective (Mayo 1953), which posits that social support and recognition from leadership enhance motivation and well-being.

A multiple regression analysis (Table 3) was used to examine the influence of leadership and job satisfaction on grit. Results revealed that leadership significantly predicted grit ($\beta = 0.189$, $p = 0.034$), while job satisfaction did not have a statistically significant effect ($p = 0.266$).

Table 3. Regression Analysis Predicting Grit

PREDICTOR	COEFFICIENT	P-VALUE	INTERPRETATION
Leadership	0.189	0.034	Significant predictor of grit
Job Satisfaction	0.168	0.266	Not significant

Source: Authors 2024

This finding highlights the contextual nature of grit, as leadership appears to be a critical environmental factor that fosters perseverance and motivation among international educators (Caza and Posner 2019, Kaya et al. 2024).

The mediation model was tested using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) to assess whether grit mediated the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. The results indicate that grit significantly mediated the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. A mediation effect occurs when the influence of one variable (leadership) on another (job satisfaction) operates through a third variable (grit). The reported p-value ($p = 0.002$) shows this indirect effect is statistically significant, meaning it is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. The mediation pathway suggests that effective leadership enhances employees' grit—their perseverance and sustained effort toward long-term goals. Increased grit, in turn, leads to higher levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, leadership improves job satisfaction not only directly but also indirectly by strengthening employees' grit. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Mediation Analysis using PROCESS Macro (Model 4)

Path	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	P-value	95% CI	Interpretation
Leadership→ Grit (a)	0.189	0.088	2.15	0.034	[0.02, 0.34]	Leadership increases grit
Grit→ Job Satisfaction (b)	0.037	0.012	3.08	0.002	[0.01, 0.06]	Grit predicts job satisfaction
Leadership→Job Satisfaction (c')	0.385	0.067	5.75	0.000	[0.25, 0.51]	Direct effect significant
Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.022	—	—	—	[0.007, 0.042]	Mediation supported

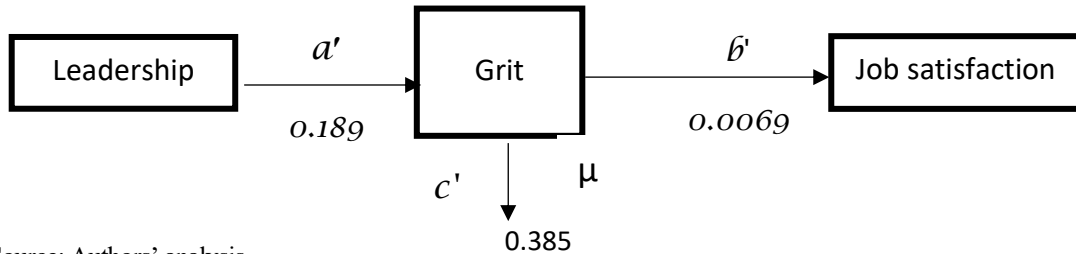
Source: Authors 2024

The results indicate that grit significantly mediated the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. A mediation effect occurs when the influence of one variable (leadership) on another (job satisfaction) operates through a third variable (grit). The reported p-value ($p = 0.002$) shows that this indirect effect is statistically significant. The mediation pathway (Figure 1) suggests that effective leadership enhances employees' grit—their perseverance and sustained effort toward long-term goals. Increased grit, in turn, leads to higher levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, leadership improves job satisfaction not only directly but also indirectly by strengthening employees' grit.

This finding implies that organisations seeking to improve job satisfaction should focus not only on leadership development but also on cultivating grit among employees, as it is a key mechanism through which leadership exerts its positive influence.

Leadership has a substantial direct relationship with job satisfaction; a small but statistically significant portion of the leadership effect on job satisfaction appears to operate via grit. In practical terms, while leadership directly impacts job satisfaction (resources, conditions, support), some of that effect also flows through employees' perseverance and long-term commitment.

Figure 1. Mediation Model of Leadership, Grit, and Job Satisfaction



Source: Authors' analysis

Note: $p < 0.05$ for all significant paths

This finding reinforces Mayo's (1953) Human Relations theory, demonstrating that leadership behaviours—particularly those fostering trust, recognition, and support—can shape individual-level psychological resources such as grit, which subsequently enhance satisfaction and commitment (Rego et al. 2021, He 2023). It furthermore suggests that organisations seeking to improve job satisfaction should focus not only on leadership development but also on cultivating grit among employees, as it is a key mechanism through which leadership exerts its positive influence.

The results revealed that perceived school leadership had a significant positive influence on both grit and job satisfaction among international migrant teachers. Educators who viewed their leaders as supportive, communicative, and participative reported higher levels of perseverance and professional commitment, consistent with the Human Relations perspective (Mayo 1953), which holds that social and interpersonal conditions in the workplace directly shape motivation and satisfaction. Mediation analysis further indicated that grit partially mediated the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction, accounting for approximately 6% of the indirect effect. This suggests that effective leadership not only enhances job satisfaction directly but also indirectly strengthens it by cultivating perseverance and passion for long-term professional goals—psychological resources that promote engagement and resilience in demanding educational contexts (Duckworth et al. 2007, He 2023).

These findings underscore leadership as a critical contextual factor influencing both affective and motivational outcomes in international school environments. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, inclusivity, and participatory decision-making foster climates that support teachers' persistence through challenges such as cultural transition, curriculum adaptation, and professional identity negotiation (Derrah 2024, Ennerberg and Economou 2021). Aligning with the Human Relations model, the study highlights that teacher well-being and motivation stem not only from organisational structures but also from the social fabric of trust, recognition, and support that leadership cultivates. Cultivating such leadership practices may therefore be instrumental in enhancing teacher satisfaction, resilience, and retention across globally mobile educator populations.

Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence that perceived leadership behaviours in international school settings are positively associated with teachers' grit and job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with Human Relations theory (Mayo, 1953), which posits that leadership that fosters supportive relationships, recognition, and attention to employees' social and emotional needs creates conditions conducive to motivation and satisfaction. They also align with recent empirical research that links supportive leadership to resilience and satisfaction among educators (Kaya et al. 2024, He 2023).

The significant association between leadership and grit suggests that leaders' behaviours—such as providing support, clear communication, and professional development opportunities—enhance teachers' capacity to sustain effort and interest in long-term professional goals. These findings complement prior studies, which have shown that school climate and professional support influence teacher resilience and grit (Ismail 2023, Lee 2024).

The mediation analysis indicates that grit accounts for a modest but statistically significant portion of the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction. While leadership directly influences job satisfaction through working conditions, recognition, and policy support, it also indirectly shapes teachers' dispositions, reinforcing persistence and long-term engagement. This layered effect conceptually supports Mayo's emphasis on the interplay between social-psychological workplace processes and both affective (satisfaction) and motivational (grit) outcomes.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to infer causality between leadership, grit, and job satisfaction. While mediation analysis provides insight into potential mechanisms, longitudinal or experimental research would be required to confirm directional effects. Second, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or subjective interpretation of leadership and personal traits. Although validated instruments were employed, common method variance (CMV) cannot be fully excluded. Third, the sample size ($n = 103$) and its composition—predominantly teachers in international schools located in Europe, Africa, and Asia—may limit the generalisability of results to all international educators. Furthermore, the use of homogeneous purposive sampling means that participation was self-selected, which may have attracted individuals already engaged with leadership and professional development discourses. Finally, the study did not control for cultural, institutional, or organisational differences between international schools, which might influence perceptions of leadership and job satisfaction. Future research incorporating multi-site or cross-cultural comparative designs could address this limitation and strengthen external validity.

Contributions

Despite these limitations, the study makes significant contributions both theoretically and practically to the literature on international education and leadership.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings extend the Human Relations model (Mayo 1953) by empirically demonstrating that grit functions as a psychological pathway linking supportive leadership to enhanced job satisfaction. This integration of classical motivational theory with contemporary non-cognitive constructs offers a more holistic understanding of teacher well-being and persistence in global educational contexts.

Practically, the results highlight the crucial role of school leadership in creating psychosocial climates that foster motivation and resilience among international educators.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented in Table 7 provide a comprehensive framework for enhancing teacher grit and job satisfaction in international school contexts. They integrate both conventional leadership development strategies and innovative approaches, such as digital mentoring, grit-enhancement programmes, and culturally tailored onboarding. The recommendations emphasise the dual role of leadership: directly shaping teachers' work environment through supportive and participative practices, and indirectly fostering individual psychological resources, such as grit, that sustain long-term motivation. Furthermore, they recognise the diversity of teacher roles and international contexts, encouraging interventions that are sensitive to professional responsibilities and cultural variations. Collectively, these strategies offer actionable guidance for school leaders and HR managers to improve professional fulfilment, retention, and resilience among migrant teachers, while also contributing to the broader evidence base on leadership, non-cognitive skills, and teacher outcomes.

Because this is an exploratory study, recommendations are tentative and framed as options for practice and future research rather than prescriptive mandates. Table 7 summarises practical and innovative strategies for fostering teacher grit and job satisfaction in international school contexts:

Table 7. Recommendations for Enhancing Teacher Grit and Job Satisfaction

No	Recommendations	Implementation example	Support Evidence
1	Leadership development	Provide training that emphasises supportive behaviours such as clear communication, psychological safety, and professional development.	He 2023 Kaya et al. 2024
2	Targeted support for non-classroom staff	Investigate working conditions and develop support structures for teacher assistants and other support staff to enhance job satisfaction and promote resilience.	Torres 2019 Chasani 2022
3	Selection and development	Include non-cognitive qualities (e.g., grit) as part of ethical recruitment and professional development processes.	Duckworth et al. 2007 Credé et al. 2024
4	Cautious evaluation	Assess interventions through longitudinal designs before scaling up.	Creswell and Creswell 2023
5	Grit enhancement programmes	Structured workshops, reflective journaling, goal setting, and peer coaching, delivered over multiple sessions.	Credé et al. 2024
6	Digital mentoring/peer networks	Implement digital mentoring platforms that link migrant teachers to experienced peers or leaders, including modules on cultural transition and accreditation.	Pesina 2025
7	Shared / distributive leadership	Establish teacher committees, peer-led professional learning communities, and participative decision-making forums.	Liu and Watson 2023
8	Instructional leadership + empowerment	Co-design culturally responsive pedagogy: assign meaningful, autonomous projects to strengthen professional purpose and grit.	Zahed-Babelan et al. 2024
9	Cultural and accreditation onboarding	Peer-buddy systems, accreditation guidance, and cultural adjustment workshops for migrant teachers, along with ongoing check-ins by leadership.	Chughtai 2018 Angwaomaodoko 2023
10	Longitudinal monitoring and mixed-method evaluation	Track teacher perceptions of leadership, grit, and satisfaction over time using surveys and interviews.	Credé et al. 2024
11	Contextualised interventions by role and country	Tailor leadership and support interventions to differences between teachers vs. assistants, and to local policy/cultural norms.	Liu and Watson 2023 Angwaomaodoko 2023

Source: Authors 2025

Conclusion

Perceived leadership behaviours in international school contexts are positively associated with teachers' grit and job satisfaction. Grit mediates a small but statistically significant portion of leadership's influence on job satisfaction, indicating that leadership fosters both direct and indirect pathways to professional fulfilment. Findings are exploratory, and caution is warranted in generalising results. Future research should employ larger, more representative samples and longitudinal designs to examine causality and explore how national context, accreditation processes, and school policies interact with leadership to shape the experiences of migrant teachers.

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