

educational context remains unverified, with limited localized studies in Kunming. Third, most research employs qualitative methods lacking support from large-scale quantitative analysis. Addressing these gaps, this study focuses on Kunming universities to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and students' attitudes toward aesthetic education, offering significant theoretical and practical value.

Research Objectives

1. Explore whether transformational leadership has a significant impact on students' emotional attitudes towards aesthetic education (such as interest, identification, etc.), and analyze the intensity and direction of the impact.
2. Examine the actual impact of transactional leadership on students' emotional attitudes towards aesthetic education, and clarify its correlation with students' attitudes as well as the positive or negative nature of the impact.
3. Analyze the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and students' emotional attitudes towards aesthetic education, and determine its significant impact on students' attitudes and its performance in different situations.
4. Comprehensively investigate the combined effect of the three leadership styles on students' attitudes towards aesthetic education, verify the comprehensive effect, and clarify the intensity of the impact and the key paths.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on leadership style theory, attitude three-component model and aesthetic education function theory. The core variables are related as follows:

1. Independent variables: Three leadership styles of school administrators —— Change leadership (influencing teachers and students through vision motivation and personalized care), transactional leadership (maintaining organizational operation through reward and punishment mechanism), and laissez-faire leadership (lacking active guidance and supervision);
2. Dependent variable: students' attitude towards aesthetic education, including emotional dimension (interest in aesthetic education, satisfaction, etc.), behavioral dimension (frequency and enthusiasm of participating in aesthetic education, etc.), cognitive dimension (understanding the value of aesthetic education, setting learning objectives, etc.).

Leadership styles indirectly shape students' aesthetic education attitudes by influencing teachers' instructional strategies and the allocation of school aesthetic resources. Transformational leadership may enhance aesthetic education attitudes by stimulating teachers' creativity and students' intrinsic motivation. Transactional leadership might influence student participation through short-term rewards and punishments. Meanwhile, laissez-faire leadership could reduce students' aesthetic education engagement due to insufficient guidance.

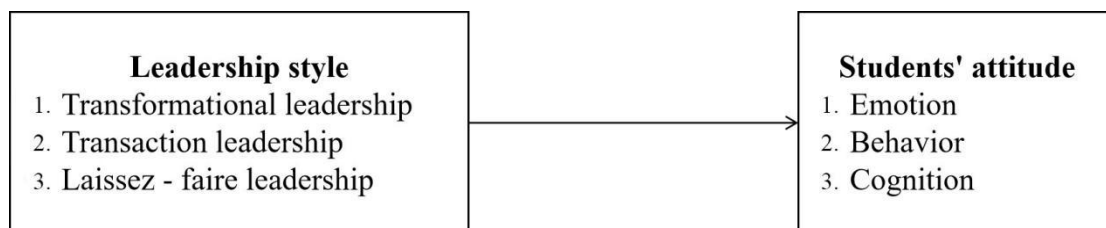


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Diagram

Hypotheses

H₁: Transformational leadership has a significant impact on students' attitude towards aesthetic education.

H₂: Transactional leadership has a significant impact on students' attitude towards aesthetic education.

H₃: Permissive leadership has a significant influence on students' attitude towards aesthetic education.

H₄: There is a comprehensive effect of three leadership styles on students' attitude towards aesthetic education.

Literature Review

Leadership style related theory

1. Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985): This approach stimulates followers' intrinsic motivation through the "4I Model" (Vision Motivation, Personalized Care, Intellectual Challenge, Idealization Influence), encouraging them to transcend personal interests and pursue shared goals. In educational settings, this style enhances teachers' instructional engagement and students' innovative capabilities (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

2. Transactional Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978): Based on social exchange theory, it maintains organizational efficiency by clarifying reward and punishment mechanisms (such as performance rewards and exceptional management), which can improve behavior performance in the short term, but may inhibit intrinsic motivation (Hattie, 2009).

3. Permissive leadership theory (Lewin, et al., 1939): manifested by avoiding decision-making and lack of supervision, often leading to vague organizational goals, insufficient member input, and related to low academic achievement (Hoy & Miskel, 2012).

Theory of aesthetic attitude

1. Three-component model of attitude (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960): Attitude is composed of emotion (emotional response), behavior (tendency to participate) and cognition (value judgment), which provides a framework for analyzing students' aesthetic education attitude.

2. Aesthetic Education Function Theory (Dewey, 1934): Aesthetic education promotes emotional cultivation and critical thinking through artistic experience, and finally realizes the comprehensive development of personality. Its core value lies in connecting cognitive and emotional development.

There is no existing research gap

Existing studies focus on the influence of leadership style on traditional subject learning, but pay insufficient attention to the field of aesthetic education; there are few studies on the applicability of western theories in the context of localization in China; and there is a lack of discussion on the comprehensive effect of leadership style (Li & Wang, 2021).

Research Instrument

Crowd and sample

The study involved students from multiple vocational colleges in Kunming, Yunnan Province. Using stratified random sampling, participants were categorized by school type (e.g., arts-focused or comprehensive) and grade level, ultimately selecting 550 students as the sample. The sample size was calculated using Yamane's formula (1967) with an allowable error margin of 0.05 to ensure representativeness.

Research tool

1. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Revised Edition): This instrument measures three leadership styles through five items each: Change Leader (5 items, such as "Leaders encourage us to express artistic works in innovative ways"), Transactional Leader (5 items, such as "Schools motivate participation in art activities through reward and punishment systems"), and Contingent Leader (5 items, such as "Leaders rarely focus on the quality of aesthetic education"). The assessment employs a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

2. Aesthetic Education Learning Attitude Scale: Designed based on the three-component attitude model, it includes three dimensions: emotional (5 items, such as "I look forward to attending aesthetic education classes"), behavioral (5 items, such as "I actively participate in school aesthetic education activities"), and cognitive (5 items, such as "I believe aesthetic education helps improve comprehensive abilities"). The scale also employs a 5-point Likert scale.

Data Collection

From March to April 2025, we conducted online surveys via the "Wenjuanxing" platform, collecting a total of 545 valid responses (with a 99.1% effective response rate). Prior to data collection, we coordinated with the school to obtain institutional support, clearly explaining the research objectives and anonymity requirements to ensure data authenticity. Post-collection quality control measures were implemented through logical validation processes, including exclusion of extreme values.

Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out by SPSS 26.0 software:

1. Descriptive statistics: calculate the mean and standard deviation of each variable to present the current situation;
2. Test of reliability and validity: Cronbach's α coefficient was used to test the reliability ($\alpha > 0.7$ is reliable), and KMO and Bartlett test were used to test the validity;
3. Correlation analysis: analyze the correlation between leadership style and aesthetic attitude through Pearson correlation coefficient;
4. Regression analysis: Build a regression model to test the influence and comprehensive effect of each leadership style on each dimension of aesthetic attitude.

Sample basic characteristics

Among the 545 respondents, male students accounted for 52.3% and female students for 47.7%. The highest proportion was third-year students (41.3%), followed by second-year students (37.6%). Students from vocational colleges accounted for 67.9%, while those from undergraduate institutions accounted for 32.1%. 55% had never participated in aesthetic education courses, and 35.8% engaged in art activities at a "moderate frequency" monthly (Table 1).

Table 1 Basic information of samples

project	class	frequency	percentage
sex	man	285	52.3%
	woman	260	47.7%
grade	freshman	55	10.1%
	sophomore	205	37.6%
	junior	225	41.3%
	senior	60	11.0%
School type	higher vocational school	370	67.9%
	university	175	32.1%
Participation in aesthetic education courses	yes	245	45.0%
	deny	300	55.0%

Variable status and correlation

The overall mean value of leadership styles was 3.83 (SD=0.908), with transformational (M=3.46) and laissez-faire (M=3.44) slightly higher than transactional (M=3.21). The overall mean value of students' aesthetic education attitudes was 3.96 (SD=0.867), with the emotional dimension (M=3.9) being the highest and the behavioral dimension (M=3.1) the lowest (Table 2). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant moderate positive correlation between leadership styles and students' aesthetic education attitudes ($r=0.564$, $p<0.01$).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of leadership style and students' attitude towards aesthetic education

variable	sample capacity	mean	standard error
Leadership style overall	545	3.83	0.908
transformational leadership	545	3.46	1.046
Transactional leadership	545	3.21	0.94
Permissive leadership	545	3.44	1.088
Students' attitude towards aesthetic education is overall	545	3.96	0.867
Emotional dimension	545	3.9	1.014
Behavioral dimensions	545	3.1	0.977
Cognitive dimension	545	3.53	1.072

Regression analysis results

Transformational Leadership: It shows a significant positive impact on the affective dimension ($\beta=$, $p<0.01$) and a significant negative impact on the cognitive dimension ($\beta=-$

0.202, $p < 0.01$), while having no significant effect on the behavioral dimension ($p > 0.05$). This aligns with Jiabin, et al. 's (2024) findings regarding transformational leadership's enhancement of affective engagement. However, the negative impact on the cognitive dimension may stem from an overemphasis on "inspiration" at the expense of structured knowledge transfer (Ma & Huang, 2024).

Table 3 Regression Analysis Table for the Impact of Transformational Leadership Style on the Cognitive Dimension: 1 – Variable 2 – Unstandardized Coefficient (B) 3 – Standardized Coefficient (Beta) 4 – t-value 5 – Significance (Sig.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Constant		1.651	-	11.528	0
Participation in Aesthetic Education Courses		-0.233	-0.108	-2.194	0.029
Frequency of Participation in Art Activities per Month		0.162	0.155	3.558	0
Transformational Leadership Style		-0.207	-0.202	-5.185	0

1. Transactional Leadership: It has a significant positive impact on the affective dimension ($\beta = 0.167$, $p < 0.01$), while showing a significant negative effect on behavioral ($\beta = -0.150$, $p = 0.002$) and cognitive dimensions ($\beta = -0.149$, $p < 0.01$). Short-term rewards and punishments can enhance affective satisfaction, but may weaken intrinsic motivation in the long run (Güven & Polat, 2016).

Table 4 Regression Analysis of the Influence of Transactional Leadership Style on the Affective Dimension: 1 – Variable 2 – Unstandardized Coefficient (B) 3 – Standardized Coefficient (Beta) 4 – t-value 5 – Significance (Sig.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Constant		1.924	-	13.26	0
Participation in Aesthetic Courses		0.324	0.159	2.967	0.003
Frequency of Monthly Artistic Activities		-0.029	-0.03	-0.63	0.529
Transactional Leadership Style		0.157	0.167	3.939	0

2. Permissive leadership: shows a significant positive effect on the affective dimension ($\beta = 0.247$, $p < 0.01$), but no significant impact on behavioral and cognitive dimensions ($p > 0.05$). Moderate autonomy can enhance emotional comfort, but the lack of guidance may limit behavioral engagement (Jiabin, et al., 2024).

Table 5 Regression Analysis Table for the Impact of Laissez-Faire Leadership Style on the Affective Dimension: 1 – Variable 2 – Unstandardized Coefficient (B) 3 – Standardized Coefficient (Beta) 4 – t-value 5 – Significance (Sig.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Constant		1.758	-	11.969	0
Participation in Aesthetic Education Courses		0.373	0.183	3.49	0.001
Frequency of Participation in Art-related Activities per Month		-0.031	-0.031	-0.671	0.503
Laissez-Faire Leadership Style		0.231	0.247	6.03	0

3. Comprehensive effect: The three leadership styles have a significant positive influence on students' attitude towards aesthetic education ($\beta=0.086$, $p=0.013$), supporting H4, indicating that leadership styles need multiple coordination (Ahmadi, et al., 2020).

Table 6 Regression Analysis Table of Managers' Leadership Styles on Students' Attitudes towards Aesthetic Education Learning: 1 – Variable 2 – Unstandardized Coefficient (B) 3 – Standardized Coefficient (Beta) 4 – t-value 5 – Significance (Sig.)

	1	2	3	4	5
Constant		1.824	-	17.298	0
Participation in Aesthetic Education Courses		0.163	0.093	2.118	0.035
Frequency of Participation in Artistic Activities per Month		-0.001	-0.001	-0.03	0.976
Managers' Leadership Styles		0.069	0.086	2.497	0.013

Research recommendations

Based on the research findings that transformational leadership significantly impacts students' aesthetic attitudes (especially emotional and cognitive dimensions), transactional leadership has limited short-term effects, laissez-faire leadership shows moderate emotional benefits but lacks behavioral guidance, and the combined effect of the three styles is significant, this study proposes the following recommendations:

Optimize leadership capacity building with "transformational leadership as the core and multi-style coordination"

Stratified training for leaders at all levels: Senior managers (e.g., deans) should focus on formulating 3-5 year aesthetic education development plans with clear indicators (e.g., raising student participation in aesthetic courses to over 60% in 3 years, building 2-3 interdisciplinary platforms) and integrating Yunnan's intangible cultural heritage (e.g., tie-dyeing, Dian Opera) into aesthetic education. Front-line staff (e.g., class tutors) need to master

the "4I Model" of transformational leadership, with monthly workshops on stimulating students' intrinsic motivation in aesthetic activities (e.g., guiding ethnic culture-themed creations and providing personalized feedback).

Establish a leadership style exchange platform: Hold quarterly "Aesthetic Education Leadership Forums" to share successful cases (e.g., using transformational leadership to boost participation in "Yunnan Ethnic Art Festival" by 40%; using transactional leadership with small rewards to motivate short-term art competition participation). Develop an online case database to record application scenarios of different styles (e.g., transactional leadership for short-term sign-ups, combining laissez-faire leadership with student-led clubs).

Motivate students' behavioral participation through "diversified incentives + low-threshold engagement"

Given the low score of the behavioral dimension (M=3.1), Improve the "credit + certification" dual incentive system, Integrate aesthetic activity participation into comprehensive quality evaluation: 1 credit for 8-10 sessions, 2 credits for competition awards (credits can offset optional courses). Launch "Aesthetic Education Achievement Certification" (Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced) based on participation, outputs, and peer reviews; Advanced holders get priority for Yunnan art museum/cultural heritage study tours.

Design local culture-based activities: Develop weekend "Yunnan Intangible Heritage Experience Workshops" (e.g., tie-dyeing, bamboo weaving) with simplified processes and free materials. Promote interdisciplinary activities like "Science + Art" (e.g., digital ethnic pattern design, lectures on Yunnan's geological landscape aesthetics co-taught by geographers and artists).

Improve curriculum and resource system

Revise talent training programs: Include three annual aesthetic course modules: theoretical (e.g., "Introduction to Aesthetics," "History of Yunnan Ethnic Art"), practical (e.g., "Art Creation Workshop"), and emotional (e.g., "Ethnic Music Appreciation"). Vocational colleges (67.9% of the sample) should add major-specific courses (e.g., "Hotel Space Design Aesthetics" for hospitality majors).

Increase accessible resources: Allocate funds to build 1-2 open art studios per campus (equipped with tools/software) open daily. Invite local artists, intangible heritage inheritors, and educators for monthly lectures/workshops; upload recordings to the school's online platform.

Establish a dynamic evaluation mechanism

Quarterly tracking of students' aesthetic attitudes: Use a simplified scale to survey emotional satisfaction, behavioral frequency, and cognitive recognition.

Link evaluation to leadership performance: Include student attitude scores in managers' annual assessments (20-30%); incentivize high performers (e.g., funding for national forums) and provide counseling/retraining for those with negative trends (e.g., over-reliance on transactional leadership).

Formulate rectification plans: For low behavioral participation: set up a task force with student representatives to adjust schedules/content.

For low cognitive scores: strengthen theoretical courses and invite experts to explain aesthetic education's value (e.g., enhancing creativity).

These recommendations aim to leverage transformational leadership, mitigate limitations of other styles, and promote their coordination to improve students' aesthetic attitudes in Kunming's universities.

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