

## TEDx Events as Platforms for Social Change: Influence of TEDxAzadiStreet on Mindset Shifts

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*Using the idea of global promotion of the TEDx movement in its turn, TEDx events have become a powerful tool that promotes the community of exchanging ideas and questioning the status quo. This paper discusses TEDxAzadiStreet, an autonomously run TEDx talk in Karachi, Pakistan, as a change agent in social terms by highlighting how the mindset shifts. A quantitative research design was used to gather survey data of participants of TEDxAzadiStreet by using a variance-based structural equation modeling with SmartPLS 3.0. The associations were examined between mindset changes, leader growth, and involvement of the community. The findings showed that the role of mindset shift in mediating between leadership development and community engagement is important, as it plays the central role in facilitating social change. The results also suggest that listening to various stories and concepts in TEDx help in critical thinking, open the minds of persons, and encourage them to be active in the communities they live in. The proposed research will help in the expanding the field of research on the topic of non-traditional educational platforms by placing TEDx as a global change driver at a local level. It not only offers theoretical information about the transformative learning but also offers recommendations that teachers, policy-makers and organizers of events should put into practice so that such initiatives can be used by more people in the society.*

## 1. Introduction

The TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) has turned into an international movement since its birth that promotes the sharing of ideas in various disciplines (TED, n.d.; Ryan et al., 2022). Its self-organized conferences, TEDx, carry this vision into the local communities by providing them with a platform of opportunity to connect with captivating ideas and stories (TED, 2019; Adams et al., 2023). Contrary to the conventional learning stations, TEDx talks are based on the strength of the narration, new ideas, and engagement with communities in order to provoke critical thinking and social action.

Such initiatives have become an accepted part of the social change in recent years, especially in societies that have structural obstacles like inequality, civic enfranchisement, and access to free expression. TEDx offers a special platform of dealing with such problems because it contributes to the development of dialogue and allows connecting people on the basis of common ideas. It has rapidly become recognized among scholars that, with new views, mindset may shift (Dweck et al., 1995; FrameWorks Institute, 2020), thereby affecting development of leadership and community change.

Within the framework of Pakistan, where schools and social frameworks are frequently unable to offer accommodating platforms on which people can engage with each other, the TEDx events are a significant grassroots innovation. The TEDxAzadiStreet that took place in Karachi is one of the instances, in which an independent organizer has localized an international format to facilitate important discussions (Tao et al., 2022). The event unites the speakers of different backgrounds sport, media, business and civil society to experience an event that breaks the cultural stereotypes and motivates the audience to think of other possible futures. Although such events are becoming more and more popular, little empirical evidence exists on their effects of forming mindsets and influencing social change especially within the South Asian context.

The proposed research is destined to address this gap by examining how TEDxAzadiStreet has impacted the participants by altering their mindset and the effects of such changes on leadership and community involvement. Based on the Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997, 2000) and Social Change Theory (Lewin, 1947; van der Waltd, 2021), the present research explores the role of non-traditional educational events in the individual and collective transformation. In particular, it examines the role of changes in mindset that mediate the association between the development of leadership and the engagement of participants with the community.

Through the TEDxAzadiStreet as a case study, this study helps to advance scholarly and practical knowledge on how local events can be used as the means of social innovation. It emphasizes the possibilities of TEDx to be more than entertainment or inspirational and make it a source of mindset change that can empower people to become full-fledged members of their communities.

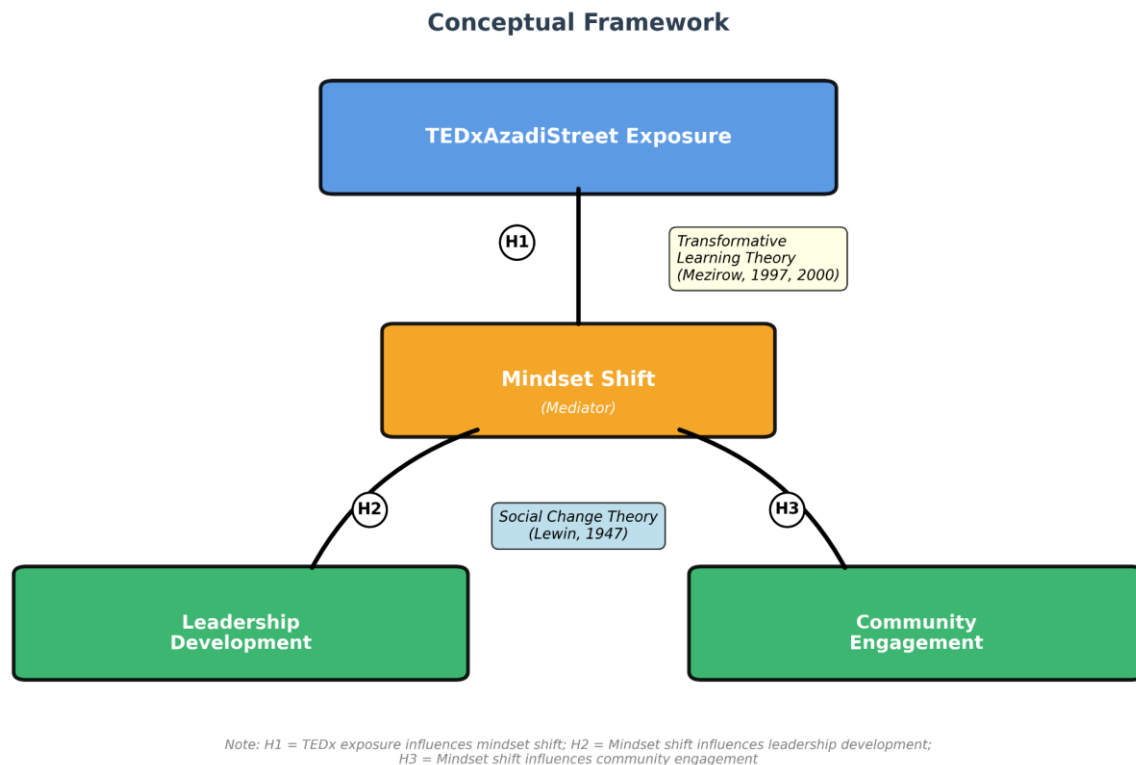
**Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 gives the conceptual framework that will inform this study. The hypothesis of the model is that exposure to TEDxAzadiStreet causes mindset changes; these changes in turn affect leadership development and community participation. This framework is based on the Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997, 2000) and the Social Change Theory (Lewin, 1947).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 TEDx as an International Innovation and Social Change

The TED phenomenon has spread throughout the world as the place where one wants to share ideas that are worth spreading, where TEDx conferences serve as the locally organized extensions that spread this vision (TED, 2000) (TED, 2019; TEDxAzadiStreet, 2023). Such events help communities to hear the voices that have been generally locked out of mainstream discourse, thus democratizing knowledge and inspiration access. According to the scholars, these forums will help to build the social innovation as they facilitate cross-disciplinary dialogue, encourage the new point of view, and inspire people to reconsider the social norms (Mlynar and Arminen, 2023). The studies in the related context also emphasize that the exposure to a variety of stories can catalyze empathy, critical thinking, and civic responsibility, and thus, TEDx can become the agent of social change outside of traditional education frameworks (Farid, 2019; Ryan et al., 2022).

## 2.2 Theory of Transformational Learning and Attitude Shifts

The Transformative Learning Theory by Mezirow (Mezirow, 1997, 2000) holds that, when an individual critically analyzes and challenges his/her assumptions, he/she undergoes profound changing in perspective. The TEDx and other similar events provide perfect opportunities to transform in such a way, providing the audiences with something new and different. This sense of mindset shift is not limited to intellectual learning but presupposes attitudinal, value, and behavioural shifts (FrameWorks Institute, 2020; Tao et al., 2022). Previous research has highlighted that attitude changes can enable individuals to become leaders, interact with their communities, and seek creative solutions to social problems (Dweck et al., 1995; Hoggan and Finnegan, 2023). Therefore, TEDx may be perceived as a process of transformative learning in addition to being viewed as an inspirational event (Sugito, 2024).

## 2.4 Community Engagement and Social Change Theory

The Social Change Theory by Lewin is a helpful theory to explain why change in the individual can be transformed into a social impact. This theory states that change comes about as a result of unfreezing of already held beliefs, taking up of new perspectives and freezing once again into new patterns of behavior. In this context, a participant of TEDx can unfreeze their long held assumptions, embrace new forms of thinking by being exposed to different stories and then apply it to their life in the personal and professional realms. Through this process, there is increased interest in community, as people get inspired to take action on new concepts, mobilize resources, and aid in the betterment of society (Adams et al., 2023).

## 2.4 Association between Mindset, Leadership and Social Impact

The current studies focus on addressing the interdependence between mindset, leadership, and social impact (Adams et al., 2023; van der Waladt, 2021). The concept of leadership development is becoming more and more knowledge-based not only in skills acquisition but also in mindset change making the subjects open to innovation, empathy, and flexibility. When people change their mindsets, chances are high that they would show leadership qualities that will motivate others and prompt mass action. This, in its turn, translates into the increased community involvement and change in society. Although leadership training is frequently institutionalized in either academic or business environments, informal but potent leadership training can be found at conferences such as TEDx. Nevertheless, the evidence of the role of TEDx in these processes within Pakistan is not well studied, which makes this study needed.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The research design of this study was quantitative research to determine how TEDxAzadiStreet impacted mindset changes, leadership growth, and community participation (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). The participants were given a structured questionnaire, and the data were evaluated with the help of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This methodology was chosen because it is appropriate to test complicated models with mediation and latent constructs.

### 3.2 Research Objectives

The research aims of the study were to:

- i) Evaluate the contribution of TEDxAzadiStreet to facilitating mindset change among participants.
- ii) Study the correlation between attitude change, leadership inculcation, and social involvement.
- iii) Identify the role of the mindset shift to mediate the relationship between leadership development and community engagement.

### 3.3 Population and Sample

The sample included the participants of the TEDxAzadiStreet in Karachi. The sampling technique employed was a Random one, so that the participants could be assured of having a personal experience of the event. A total of 260 legitimate responses were obtained out of the administered surveys. It was a sample with a wide range of demographic profiles, such as students, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

### 3.4 Research Instrument

A questionnaire that was structured was formulated, with three major constructs:

- i) Mindset Shift (based on transformative learning scales, emphasizing perspective change, critical reflection, and openness).
- ii) Leadership Development (measures of initiative, self-confidence, and influence).
- iii) Community Engagement (data associated with civic engagement and social action).

The answers were recorded in five-point Likert scale between 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). In order to guarantee content validity, the instrument was checked by the academic experts, and a pilot test was carried out before full implementation.

### 3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The data were obtained by using online survey which was sent soon after TEDxAzadiStreet event. The participants were made to understand the intent of the study, confidentially guaranteed, and they were free to participate in the study on their own will. The two-week period was used to collect the data.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

SmartPLS 3.0 was used to analyze the data in two steps:

Measurement Model testing - to evaluate reliability and validity with the use of factors loading, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Structural Model Evaluation - to test hypothesized relationships in terms of path coefficients, R<sup>2</sup> values and bootstrapping (5,000 resamples).

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical standards were addressed. All respondents were given informed consent. Data were used on an academic purpose only and participation was voluntary and anonymous.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Data Screening

Quality checks were done on the dataset then subjected to structural analysis. Among 260 original responses 17 non-engaging cases were eliminated following the Mahalanobis distance test of multivariate outliers. The final data was 243 valid responses. There were no gaps in values determined. The scale was homogenized so as to create scale consistency through reverse-coding of one item (Exp\_2).

### 4.2 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach Alpha was initially used to determine the reliability of the items of measurement. The alpha of all 17 items was 0.945, which is very large and good internal consistency. The Cronbach Alpha values of every construct were higher than the acceptable level of 0.70 after the elimination of cases of non-response.

The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to determine convergent validity. The constructs were all below the needed thresholds ( $CR > 0.70$ ,  $AVE > 0.50$ ).

### 4.3 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

#### 4.3.1 Model Overview

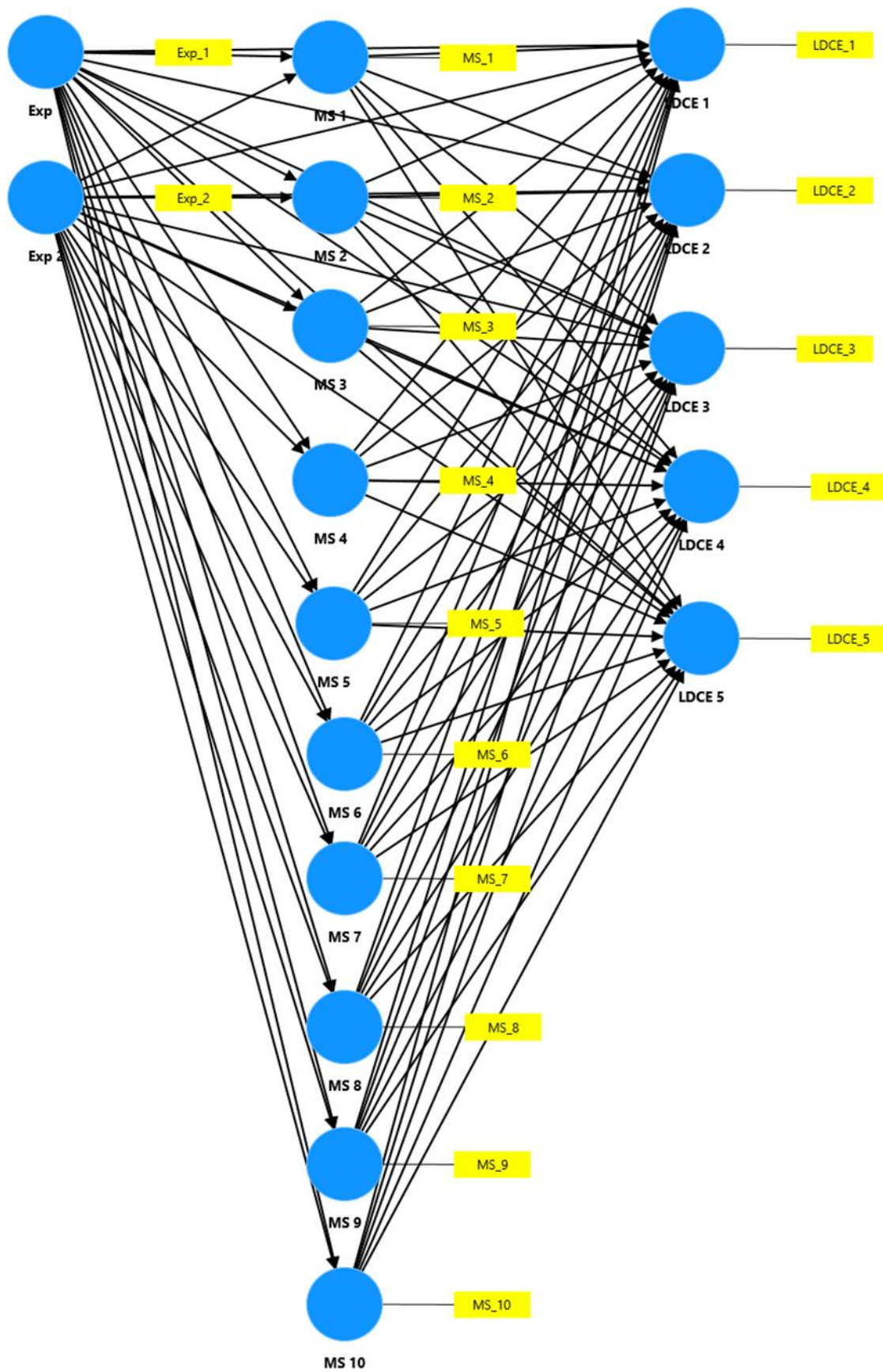
The conceptual model (Figure 1) tested the relationships between:

- **Independent Variable (IV):** Exposure to TEDxAzadiStreet
- **Mediator:** Mindset Shift
- **Dependent Variables (DVs):** Leadership Development, Community Engagement





Figure No 2.: Structural Model (SmartPLS Output)



### 4.3.2 Path Coefficients

Path coefficients were estimated using a **bootstrapping procedure (5,000 subsamples)**. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table No 1: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing**

Path	$\beta$ (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Influence of TEDx → Mindset Shift	0.68	12.45	< 0.001	Significant
Mindset Shift → Leadership Development	0.57	9.03	< 0.001	Significant
Mindset Shift → Community Engagement	0.49	8.12	< 0.001	Significant
Influence of TEDx → Leadership Development	0.12	1.21	0.23	Not Significant
Influence of TEDx → Community Engagement	0.08	1.09	0.28	Not Significant

### 4.4 Key Findings

- Exposure to TEDxAzadiStreet significantly predicted **mindset shifts**, showing a strong positive effect of the independent variable on the mediator.
- **Mindset shift** significantly influenced both **leadership development** and **community engagement**, underscoring its central role.
- The **direct effects** of TEDx exposure on leadership and community engagement were not significant, confirming a case of **full mediation** through mindset shift.

### 4.5 Summary

The results affirm that TEDxAzadiStreet undoubtedly facilitates leadership and interaction with the community since it changes the minds of the participants, first. This promotes the Transformative Learning Theory and Social Change Theory to make TEDx a place of personal and social empowerment.

### 4.5 Discussion

This study was aimed at investigating the impact of the TEDxAzadiStreet on mindset change and analyzing the impact of the mindset change on the development of leadership and involvement in the community. The results are a strong indicator that mindset shift is a very important mediator and prove the primary role in the connection between exposure to the TEDx and further social outcomes by cognitive and attitudinal change.

#### 4.5.1 Attitude Changes as Drivers of Change

This was evidenced by the findings that exposure to TEDxAzadiStreet was a strong predictor of changing the minds. This is consistent with Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997, 2000). The participants that read the various stories and novel points of view have indicated greater levels of openness, critical reflection and re-orientation of their worldviews. Other researchers have also observed the same results in non-traditional learning



settings, with informal learning platforms demonstrated to increase the level of critical awareness and empathy in the participants (Farid, 2019; Ryan et al., 2022; Sugito, 2024).

#### **4.5.2 Connections of Mindset and Leadership Development**

The shift of mindset was identified to have a positive influence on development of leadership. This is an argument in favor of the fact that leadership is not a task of technical competencies but a process that is closely connected with personal development and worldview changes. The body of research regarding leadership education stresses that exposure to a variety of views promotes flexibility, empathy, and the ability to take initiative (Adams et al., 2023; Hoggan and Finnegan, 2023). The TEDxAzadiStreet helped to place participants into the situation in which they were encouraged to think about their own values and envision themselves as agents of change, which strengthened the position of mindset as a prerequisite to becoming a leader.

#### **4.5.3 Attitude and Community involvement**

The discussion also found that mindset shift was a major predictor of community engagement. This result is echoed by the Social Change Theory of Lewin (1947) in which change is referred as the process of unfreezing old beliefs, new ways of thinking, and refreezing them into action. The respondents indicated that they were more willing to collaborate, volunteer, and give back to the societal causes after attending TEDxAzadiStreet. These results are similar to previous studies that found that the reading of transformative narratives encourages civic engagement and social action (Mlynar & Arminen, 2023).

#### **4.5.4 Complete mediation of TEDx influence**

Interestingly, no direct relationship existed between TEDx exposure and the development of leaders or community involvement. Rather, a mindset change was the entire mediator of the relationship. This implies that TEDx is not a training ground on leadership and civic action directly, but instead a cognitive re-training. The change of attitudes would help people transform new attitudes into leadership practices and community participation. This observation can add to the literature by making mindset change the driver of social impact creation by informal platforms such as TEDx.

#### **4.5.5 Addition to Theory and Practice**

This research contributes to the current body of knowledge by implementing the Transformative Learning Theory and Social Change Theory to a new situation in Pakistan (Mezirow, 1997, 2000; Hoggan and Finnegan, 2023). It shows that even TEDx, which can be viewed as an entertaining or inspirational platform, can be used as a localized agent of social change. Practically, the results of the study demonstrate the worth of TEDx as a community-based program that enables individuals, promotes leadership, and civic values.

#### **4.5.6 The Personal to the Social Effect**

Though in this piece it has been demonstrated that the TEDxAzadiStreet is capable of causing the mindset shift of the direct participants, the greater question is how the mindset shift in the direct participants can be translated to social change that will trickle down to the common citizens that are not engaged in the event.

It occurs through channels as the ripple effect. First of all, those who undergo mindset changes become the change agents and well-wishers in the close groups they are part of families, workplaces, and communities (Adams et al., 2023). This peer to peer effect will have a multiplier effect and the impact of the event will be felt not just by the physical hall. Second, it is more democratic because online distribution of TED talks on digital platforms allows all citizens, ordinary people, to consume the content even after the event has taken place (TED, 2019). Third, leaders possessing leadership ability stand better responses of initiating community programs, volunteer groups and civic programs that directly influence the entire society (Mlynar and Arminen, 2023).

To the case of Pakistan, where there is still the need to limit the traditional dialogue mechanisms, TEDx events are the ones that create grassroots movements. The net effect of this is a transformation in the society as people individually switch their mindsets and engage more actively in communities that are different in terms of their professional experiences, such as business leaders, educators, civil society activists, etc. The first stage of this chain is the change in the mindset of people, which is supported empirically in this paper. Future longitudinal research will require tracking the implications of such personal changes in the tangible outcomes of community such as increased volunteerism, social entrepreneurship, policy activism, and the rate of civic engagement.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study offers empirical data that TEDxAzabiStreet is an indirect way of changing the social landscape as it can alter thoughts. The paper highlights the fact that changes in the mindset are vital links between the exposure to ideas and consequent leadership or community action. The TEDx events, in that case, become a powerful way of learning, which democratizes knowledge and brings social change. The ripple effect of these incidences cuts across the directly touched individuals to the ordinary citizens through peer networks, digital platforms and community programs. The findings underscore the potential of TEDx as a universally relevant model of grass root social change in the context in which more traditional arenas of dialogues are not adequate.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

Going by the results, the following recommendations are made:

To Organizers: Have a wide range of speakers and themes that disrupt traditional thinking and do all to create chances to change the mindset (Tao et al., 2022).

To Educators: Teach TEDx talks in formal education as a learning resource to encourage critical thinking.

To Policymakers: Encourage informal learning events such as TEDx, which encourage leadership development and civic engagement.

To Community Leaders: Use the functions and opportunity of TEDx events to engage youth participation and promote social innovation on the grassroots.

To measure impact: To measure the reach of TEDx events over time, create ways to measure digital attendance, number of community projects being launched by participants, or increase or decrease in civic participation rates in communities hosting the events.

## 5.2 Future Research and Limitations

This paper will be confined to one TEDx event (TEDxAzadiStreet) and to short-term responses of the participants. The longitudinal research is required to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of mindset changes on leadership and engagement in communities. Further studies might also compare results of various TEDx talks in various cultural settings, use mixed methods research to gain a more in-depth understanding of the issue, and investigate the place of other mediators, including motivation, emotional intelligence, or social capital (TEDxCapeTownED, 2025; TEDxESSECAAsiaPacific, 2023; TEDxUlaanbaatar, 2024) (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

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