

School Leadership and Teacher Performance: Insights from Institutional Heads

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate public school heads' leadership skills and managerial attitudes and their impact on the teachers' performance. Acknowledging heads as the key representative of the school, the study emphasizes how their leadership affects teachers' motivation, professional growth, and satisfaction with their job. The study employed a qualitative research design to collect responses from 19 public primary school heads in the Taluka district, Hyderabad, Pakistan, through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to extract recurrent themes and patterns in the responses. The analysis revealed that most of the institutional heads demonstrate a democratic leadership style. The insights indicated collaborative decisions and a cooperative attitude towards teachers. The findings suggest that effective leadership based on fairness, teamwork, and problem solving maintains a positive school environment and greatly helps teachers perform better. The study recommends planned leadership training to enhance school management practices and teachers' performance.

Keywords: School Leadership, Head Leadership Style, Managerial Attitudes, Teacher Performance, School Environment

Introduction

The head of a school is the main representative of the school. To maintain a disciplined environment, heads need to develop their leadership skills. Heads must act as mentors to help and support teachers facing several difficulties at the start of their teaching careers. Newly appointed teachers generally suffer from personal issues such as self-confidence, and professional issues including balancing workload, and facing students. These issues negatively affect their students' academic performance (Vikaraman, Mansor, & Hamzah, 2017). To successfully run an institution, both leadership and managerial skills are essential. As a leader heads choose the direction, support and motivate individuals towards their goals, while, as managers, they organize plans and implement them (Bhamani, 2012).

Heads who desire to see their teachers satisfied with their jobs and aim for improved performance, make proper decisions, accomplish plans, make changes in the environment accordingly, complement staff, and award incentives to them. Heads need to express modesty and empower the staff to upsurge job satisfaction (von Fischer & De Jong, 2017).

It takes years of knowledge and practice to develop a good leadership style. More experienced heads show more effective active leadership in general, while less experienced heads may become inactive and less productive leaders (Cohen, 2015).

Research Objective

To explore the leadership styles and managerial attitudes of education institution

heads and their impact on teacher performance in government primary schools.

Scope of the Study

This study aims to focus on exploring the leadership styles and managerial attitudes of the education institutional heads of public primary schools and their effect on the teachers' performance. The study collects qualitative data using semi-structured interviews from 19 heads of schools. The insights are aimed at suggesting future leadership development programs and effective school management practices to enhance teacher performance.

Limitations of the Study

The study collects qualitative data in the form of interview questions from 19 school heads in the Taluka city of the district of Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan. Despite these limitations, the paper provides valuable insights into how leadership styles and managerial attitudes shape teacher performance. Further, the study findings can serve as a foundation for broader future studies in the field of educational leadership.

Literature Review

Heads' association with teachers impact on teachers' growth, dedication, and satisfaction with their job responsibilities. The school atmosphere is influenced by the relationship between the head and the teachers (Price, 2012). The school head plays a key role in the development of the school. Creating and fostering a quality learning atmosphere that shapes teaching and learning requires a highly skilled and dedicated leader (Krasnoff, 2015). With the increased importance of education over time, the responsibilities of school heads have become more complicated. They should adopt

managerial behaviors according to the situations. They need to encourage teachers to embrace new methods of teaching and learning (Li, 2014). Their job responsibility requires them to supervise teachers throughout the academic processes (Jared, 2011). Further, involving teachers in the decision-making process forms a very friendly relationship between the head and teachers (Amina, 2015). Inversely, heads' rude, impolite, and unfair attitude can negatively impact productivity and job satisfaction among teachers (Akin CELIK, 2013). Furthermore, teachers enjoy working with heads who have professional leadership skills to acknowledge their efforts and back their career growth (Karunanayake, 2013). Further, school heads need to act as transformative leaders to make available the best environment within the school that encompasses a social, physical, and academic atmosphere (Murtedjo & Suharningsih, 2018). Teachers' satisfaction with their job has a significant effect on the educational outcomes of students. Teachers' behavior with students determines their professional performance. Teachers must increase their knowledge and skills through training programs and self-learning activities. Moreover, teachers should employ the latest technologies to enhance teaching methods (M. Ahmed, Hussain, Ahmed, Ahmed, & Din, 2012).

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of school heads

regarding their leadership styles and their impact on teacher performance.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

| Population | Sample Size (70%) | Sampling Technique |
|------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 161 | 113 | Purposive Sampling (till saturation) |

All public primary school heads (n=161) formed the population of the study.

To select the sample for the study, a purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling technique is often used in qualitative research to select participants for a study based on their relevance to the research objectives.

However, literature suggest that based on the purpose and nature of the research, the number of participants in qualitative studies can range from 1 to 40 (Creswell, 2012), data collection may stop at the saturation point where responses get repeated and no new information or themes are emerging from the data (John W. Creswell & J. David Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection

Data were collected from selected school heads using semi-structured interviews. After conducting 17 interviews, the data began to repeat. Yet, to ensure reliability and completeness, two additional interviews were conducted, so, final respondents were n = 19.

Data Analysis

Collected qualitative data in the form of interview responses were analyzed through thematic analysis to gain insights into exploring head teachers' leadership and

managerial skills and their impact on teachers' performance in respective schools. Thematic analysis in qualitative research is a systematic and comprehensive method that discovers and categorizes recurrent themes and patterns within data. This method is effective for obtaining meaningful insights to arrive at effective conclusions (J. Ahmed, Soomro, & Syeda, 2024).

Results and Discussion

Demographics

Table1. Demographic Profile of Participating Heads (N=19)

| Category | Group | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 12 | 63.16% |
| | Female | 07 | 36.84% |
| Age in Years | 25 to 40 | 05 | 26.32% |
| | 41-50 | 12 | 63.16% |
| | Above 50 | 02 | 10.53% |
| Education | BS/MA/MSc | 18 | 94.74% |
| | M.Phil./MS | 01 | 05.26% |
| Experience as Head in Years | Up to 5 | 02 | 10.53% |
| | 6 to 15 | 09 | 47.37% |
| | 16 to 25 | 08 | 42.11% |

The analysis of demographic data revealed that nearly two-thirds (63.16%) of the responding heads are males, while females are 36.84%. This gender gap is justified as males are easily accessible and more willing to participate in studies as compared to females. Age statistics revealed that a majority of the participants (63.16%) are in the age group of 41-50 years, followed by the age group of 25-40 years (26.32%), and two participants also fell under the age

group of above 50. Regarding education, the statistics revealed that except for one respondent who had a higher qualification of M.Phil., all the respondents possess 16 years of education, which shows that heads do not prioritize higher qualifications. Regarding experiences, the statistics demonstrate that the participants are rich in experience, the experience group of 6-15 years, and 16-25 years share a cumulative the 89.48% of the overall respondents.

Thematic Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis and revealed:

How would your colleagues and staff describe your managerial behavior?

The heads responded to the question and said that the description of their managerial behavior by their staff depends on the positive and professional approach of the staff towards their job. They believed that their managerial behavior was described as responsible, cooperative, and friendly as a head.

What type of management style do you prefer?

Regarding the preference for managerial style, the heads responded that they prefer a democratic managerial/leadership style as heads in dealing with the stakeholders of the school, and to accomplish their responsibilities.

How do you motivate your staff?

Regarding motivating staff to perform better, the head replied that they use different techniques to motivate their staff. They involve staff in the decision-making process and all activities of their schools, use motivational lectures, and arrange workshops to boost staff motivation, demonstrate a

cooperative approach, and try to respond to and solve staff problems.

How do you deal with disagreement and criticism?

Regarding dealing with disagreement and criticism, the heads elaborated that they deal with criticism with patience. They give the staff freedom to express their issues, and they respect arguments. They try to convince the staff in a sophisticated manner, and impose a decision when the staff agrees.

How do you react when taking a difficult decision?

Regarding taking a difficult decision, the heads responded that they involve teachers in decision-making. They thoroughly listen to their arguments and their personal issues related to the matters. They further added that before taking a decision, they look at the pros and cons of the decision.

How do you define effective management?

Regarding effective management, they responded that they believe that effective management is putting the right person in the right place for the right job. Moreover, the heads believed that effective management is managing and solving problems as a leader.

Conclusion

This research explored primary school heads' leadership styles and managerial attitudes, and their impact on the respective institutions' teachers' performance. The study revealed that heads utilizing their leadership and managerial skills can shape a productive educational environment within the institution. Most of the heads preferred a democratic leadership style. They underscored collaboration, guidance, and support for the teachers and their

involvement in the decision-making process. The responses indicated a commitment to maintain a cooperative working atmosphere, dealing with criticism positively, and leading by example in challenging situations.

The research emphasizes the importance of professional development and continued support of school heads to enhance their abilities to lead the institutions effectively.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes, the study recommends that;

Department/institutions should arrange leadership training programs to further improve school management practices and enhance educational outcomes.

Heads of the schools should arrange different training programs and workshops to improve teachers' teaching practices and performance.

They should deal with every staff member fairly and stay away from favoritism.

Heads need to give the freedom of expression to the staff so that they feel comfortable approaching the heads.

Heads further need to take constructive criticism positively and improve themselves.

They should remain calm while handling difficult situations and making difficult decisions.

Heads should lead their staff and work as leaders.

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