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Article Title

Navigating Educational Leadership: Insights into the Effective Practices in Pakistani Schools

Abstract

Today, educational leadership is extensively investigated, with a focus on the most common styles. The scale of effective educational leadership behavior depicts a visionary, proactive, knowledgeable, and change-agent leader in an academic setting. The current study investigates school teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of their principal's leadership behavior in the school Education department in Punjab. It also examines the extent of disparity in the perception of participants due to gender and sector. The results indicated that these factors play a significant role in how teachers perceive the effectiveness of the educational behavior of head teachers. The head teachers were found to have effective educational leadership behavior as described by their relevant school teachers.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Educational Leadership, Behavior, School Heads, Teachers' Perspective

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Title

Navigating Educational Leadership: Insights into the Effective Practices in Pakistani Schools

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Contents

Abstract

Today, educational leadership is extensively investigated, with a focus on the most common styles. The scale of effective educational leadership behavior depicts a visionary, proactive, knowledgeable, and change-agent leader in an academic setting. The current study investigates school teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of their principal's leadership behavior in the school Education department in Punjab. It also examines the extent of disparity in the perception of participants due to gender and sector. The results indicated that these factors play a significant role in how teachers perceive the effectiveness of the educational behavior of head teachers. The head teachers were found to have effective educational leadership behavior as described by their relevant school teachers.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Educational Leadership, Behavior, School Heads, Teachers' Perspective

Introduction

Considering the importance of studying educational leadership and its role in nurturing a productive school environment, exploring leadership phenomena in depth is essential. Effective leadership plays a vital role in this era of competition in academia.

The current study gives a comprehensive view of the role of some salient features of a school leader that enable him to survive better. It makes his/her school a dynamic organization.

This study highlights the importance of characteristics of an academic leader like managerial behavior, instructional behavior, courage, reinforcement, and better communication

skills. It also stresses the role of a visionary leader in nurturing a good learning environment in school.

This study sheds light on the positive role of school heads. Effective school leaders must have command of communication skills, good managerial behavior, better instructional strategies, and personal characteristics like vision, courage, and good decision-making. Visionary school heads remain well-informed and have plans to achieve predetermined goals. They disseminate information quickly and stay active. Research proved that the positive attitude of a leader has a strong effect on the teachers and students (Ghaffar&Khan, 2024). Complex demographics have made it difficult for organizations to perform. The challenge is also very big for academic leaders and institute heads. Ghaffar et al. (2024) provided empirical evidence that the demographic complexity made it difficult for organizations to survive. The current study was a maiden effort to find out the effectiveness of leadership behavior, and it also aimed to explore the perceptions of teachers of public and private schools about the effectiveness of leadership behavior. It aimed to determine whether any noteworthy difference is found in teachers' perceptions due to sector and gender.

The current research explored the characteristics of effective educational leadership behavior. This is the first research on the topic in Pakistan's educational context. The literature on this topic is gaping, as no research provides empirical evidence of measuring the effectiveness of leadership behavior by teachers in the public and private sectors using the EELB scale in the educational context of Punjab, Pakistan. This unique research investigated the differences in perception due to the sector and gender disparity. This dimension provided new directions for future studies.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to

1. Solicit the opinion of teachers about the effectiveness of school leadership behavior.
2. Uncover the significant differences in teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of school leadership behavior concerning different demographics.

Research Questions

1. What is the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of school leadership behavior?

2. Is there any difference in teachers' opinions about the school leadership behavior due to gender and sector?

Review of Literature

The role of leadership is very important in the success of any organization. Previous research depicts that organizational performance is connected with leadership behaviors and that leadership behavior has a great impact on the performance of that particular organization (Ibrahim & Daniel, 2019). The phenomenon of leadership is investigated worldwide. Many researchers have sought to define educational leadership over time, resulting in various definitions depending on how each approaches the subject (Sweeney et al, 2018; Daniels et al., 2019). Numerous components of educational leadership that are also effective criteria for educational leadership can be understood by listing relevant definitions and analyzing these definitions. We can more clearly identify and distinguish between these characteristics that contribute to a leader's effectiveness if we have a firm grip on the definition of educational leadership and its major elements, such as actions, behaviors, and styles (Dimopoulos, 2020). Previous research depicts that organizational performance is connected with leadership behaviors and that leadership behavior has a great impact on the performance of that particular organization (Ibrahim& Daniel, 2019). The impact of leadership behavior on organizational performance is based on leadership skills like managerial behavior, instructional behavior, vision, courage, communication skills, and decision-making (Al-maaitah, 2021).

Effective leadership behavior instills a sense of belonging and allows for their active participation in decision-making. Therefore, it is recommended that institutions should prioritize using transformational and democratic leadership behaviors to improve the overall performance of their organizations (Nabella et al., 2022). The goal of leadership is to accomplish the organization's objectives. The leadership's ability to function effectively under stress determines what is most effective. It is important to study the results of actions to evaluate their effectiveness (Nishii &Leroy, 2022).

Some more characteristics determine the effectiveness of the behavior of the head teacher. Mutual trust is necessary to foster organizational adaptation and the employee perceptions of leading characters to improve leadership effectiveness and consider other psychological empowerment elements. Leadership must foster a climate that supports knowledge sharing among people to make firms successful

operationally and strategically (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020). School principals inculcate national education principles as a foundation for setting shared goals, and they communicate these values to the teachers in their schools. They maintain the track of curriculum development and management.

Previous studies indicate that school principals put forth tremendous effort to create the most positive learning environment possible and that they were quite successful in this endeavor; in addition, the findings of a study revealed that daily routines, the development of school resources, and an over-centralized organizational structure were all identified as significant barriers to the instructional leadership of school administrators (Gaol, 2021).

The leader's ability to communicate effectively with internal and external audiences is critical during times of crisis. Marsen (2019) points out that successful crisis communication must handle crisis and post-conflict image management. Heath and O'Hair (2020) said in a *crisis communication manual* that good communication is very important (Imran, et al., 2022). Through successful communication, all parties can build mutual understanding and obligations (Richardson et al., 2021). During a crisis, good educational leaders engage in holding, which suggests that they are containing and interpreting what is happening. Leaders think logically, provide reassurance, and assist them in remaining cohesive. It is equally crucial to do this work to inspire others; it is a requirement (Young, 2021).

Educational equity and access to education are being discussed worldwide when schools scrambled to make it easier for people who could not attend school to get online education. Every student must be given the resources they need to learn and grow in an educational setting. Early in the pandemic, it became clear that food and mental health services would have to be more important than education, at least for a short time. Our school leaders' emphasis on basic needs, social-emotional health, and access to technology matches the study literature's recognition that these things can help keep people stable in a crisis (McLeod &Dulsky, 2021).

According to Harris and Jones (2020), a new chapter is being written about school leadership in disruptive times that has the potential to surpass and overshadow everything that has been written previously on the subject. Many of the schools that we spoke with may already be in the process of reorienting and reinventing themselves. Good leadership behavior spreads a culture of equity, and it depicts the vision

of a leader/head teacher (Kilag et al., 2023). Considering teacher's opinions about the head teacher play a great role in making the school climate better. Studies reveal that teachers who perceive head teachers positively stay long on the job. They have better job satisfaction and job embeddedness levels (Ghaffar&Khan, 2024). Negative perception causes turnover and teacher burnout which ultimately results in low student achievement (Saloviita &Pakarinen, 2021). There is a gap in the literature about evaluating effective educational leadership behavior in Pakistan's educational context. Past studies also don't provide any evidence regarding the role of factors like managerial skills, vision, courage, decision-making, and reinforcement (Imran & Akhtar, 2023).

It is also important to study what the teacher thinks about the leadership behavior of their heads. Whether they consider it effective? Previous studies like Ghaffar et al. (2023) provide empirical evidence that the staff is greatly affected by the behavior of the leadership level. They provided evidence that the head teacher has a strong effect on the retention and job satisfaction of teachers (Ghaffar &Khan, 2024). The heads of the school create an environment of collaboration. It is essential to know what coworkers, staff, and faculty think about the effectiveness of leadership educational behavior of their heads of schools. According to a study by Shahbal et al. (2022), it is compulsory to explore the perception of teachers & academia if any research is conducted in an educational scenario. The demographics of participants also play a vital role in determining the perception of any educational phenomena (Ghaffar & Khan, 2024). The same fact is proved by Ning et al. (2020), in research conducted in a quite different cultural setup in China that demographics have a great effect on the perception of participants. So, the current research filled this population and literature gap.

Research Methodology

This study was quantitative. Quantitative studies are very useful because they generate numerical data and have a statistical representation of results. The results of the quantitative studies can be generated for a huge population (Mohajan, 2020). The philosophic underpinning of quantitative research is positivism (Tamminen, 2020). The results can be generalized to a wider population. The data from the participants was gathered using a questionnaire and survey method to examine their viewpoints. Participants were asked to answer a 48-item questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the perception.

Population& Sample

The target population included all 383 public and 265 private high schools for boys and girls in the district of Lahore. The sample is given in the table below.

Table 1

Demographic information of the sample

Demographic Information	n (%)	School Systems
Gender		
Male	298(52%)	
Female	282(48%)	
Sector		
Public	322(56%)	50 high schools of boys and girls running under the School Education department, Govt of Punjab
		Unique School System,
Private	258(44%)	Dar e Arqam
		The Punjab School

Researchers cannot contact everyone, including the entire population. So, the individuals who represent the parent population are selected using appropriate sampling techniques. The sample is representative of the target population's characteristics (Lohr, 2021). A convenience sampling technique was used. Convenience sampling is used when participants meet specific criteria, such as meeting at a time or geographical nearness. Many biases are associated with convenience sampling like proximity and subjective judgment of the participants. However, this risk can be reduced by using online surveys (Obilore, 2023). There were 383 public high schools for boys and girls in the district of Lahore. Twenty-five schools for boys and 25 for girls were selected from the public sector, 322 teachers were selected from the public, and 258 teachers from private schools, including Unique School System, Dar e Arqam, and The Punjab School, participated in the research. There were 298 male and 282 female teachers. Researchers collected their data from the school education department for public sector schools and from the HR department of the concerned private school system and the questionnaire was sent online. This is how the risk of any kind of bias was eliminated in this study and results obtained were more generalizable.

Research Instrument

Table2

Instrument of the study and its reliability

Factors of Effective Educational Leadership Behavior (EELB)Scale	items in each factor	Cronbach alpha
1. Managerial Behavior	6	0.720
2. Instructional Behavior	7	0.731
3. Courage	3	0.801
4. Vision	3	0.751
5. Passion	7	0.654
6. Decision Making	4	0.675
7. Persuasion	5	0.666
8. Communication skills	2	0.690
9. Collaboration	8	0.679
10. Reinforcement	3	0.711
Total	48	.820

There was not a single instrument available to measure effective educational leadership behavior in the school context of Pakistan. The researcher used a self-developed scale of effective educational leadership behavior (EELB) of head teachers to elicit the perception of high school teachers from the public and private sectors. This scale consists of ten factors and 48 items intended to *measure managerial behavior, instructional behavior, vision, courage, passion, decision-making, persuasion, communication skills, collaboration,* and *reinforcement* characteristics depicted in the head teacher's behavior. The reliability score was in the acceptable range on all factors. The reliability of the scale was checked. The obtained value of Cronbach's alpha was .820 on the overall EELB scale which indicates a very good reliability of the instrument.

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the scale was checked by eminent educationists. The suggested changes by experts were incorporated into the scale. It is important to conduct a pilot study to assess whether the instrument is fulfilling the aims of the study (Malmqvist et al., 2019). A small-scale pilot study was also conducted to check the language, understanding level, and appropriateness of items listed in the scale. The pilot study was conducted on 40 participants which enabled researchers to refine the scale and administer it to participants at the final data collection stage.

The Procedure of the Study

The researchers collected data from teachers of public and private high schools. Consent to collect data from teachers in public and private schools was obtained from officials of the school education department, The Punjab school system, and the Dar e Arqam school system. Phone numbers and credentials were collected from concerned HR departments of public and private schools. Collecting data was a time-consuming and laborious procedure. Consent forms and the EELB questionnaire were sent online. An online survey was conducted using convenience sampling. Researchers obtained data, and the response rate was quite satisfactory i.e. 69%.

Ethical Considerations

All principles of ethics in the research were followed. Participants were informed by sending a consent letter along with the questionnaire. No one was forced to participate in the study. Researchers openly claimed that the information obtained from participants would be kept secret and used only for research purposes. It was also announced that no information about teachers participating in the study would be shared with any institute or department.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 20 software. Demographic and numeric data obtained through the research instrument were separately entered into SPSS files. It is essential to obtain descriptive statistics on variables. Its purpose is to check that the researcher is not violating any assumption made by individual tests (Plant, 2020). Descriptive statistics was applied. It gives a variety of information. Mean and standard deviation were applied. Independent sample t-test was used to compare the mean score on the perception of participants based on gender and sector.

Results and discussion

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of the key variable of the study (N=580)

Factors of the study	Mean	SD
Managerial Behavior	3.34	0.79
Instructional Behavior	3.33	0.67
Courage	3.52	0.75
Vision	3.51	0.75
Passion	3.58	0.76
Decision making	3.56	0.76
Persuasion	3.43	0.71
Communication skills	3.41	0.71

Factors of the study	Mean	SD
Collaboration	3.53	0.75
Reinforcement	3.60	0.77
Total EELB scale	3.60	0.77

Table 3 shows the factors of the study and their relative mean score and standard deviation. The factor of *Instructional behavior* mean score of 3.33 indicates that teachers are of the view that heads of their institutions have a great tendency to observe teacher activities in class, they frequently visit classrooms and arrange parent-teacher meetings. A magnitude mean score of 3.52 on *the Courage* factor depicts that head teachers of schools have courageous behavior towards warning the teachers and students if they don't perform up to the mark and boldly take action for better school performance. The mean score of 3.51 on the *Vision* factor indicates that teachers think that their head teacher has a broad vision about the progress of the school. On the *Passion* factor, the mean score of 3.58 proves the fact that teachers strongly perceive the fact that head teachers are punctual, hardworking, and passionate about making the learning environment of the school better. They warmly welcome new ideas. A mean score of 3.56 on *the Decision-making* factor shows that head teachers trust their team and pick good ideas for innovation's persuasion factor, and a mean score of 3.43 depicts that head teachers have good observation and appreciate good ideas, nurture the rule of law in school, and create an enthusiastic environment. A mean score of 3.41 on *the Communication Skills* factor tells that head teachers have very good communication skills. School teacher perception (3.53) on *the Collaboration* factor proves that their head teachers like the participation of staff in school activities and they also share information with staff. The highest mean score 3.60 on the *Reinforcement* factor indicates that teachers have a very strong perception about the head teacher's ability to reinforce staff to work enthusiastically. They continuously get feedback from stakeholders to make things better. The mean score on the overall scale was 3.60 which indicates that the school heads possess an effective educational leadership behavior. They have the potential to make their concerned school a learning hub. Their vision and qualities are enabling teachers and the schools to grow and flourish professionally.

Table 4

Comparison between School Teacher Perceptions of Effective Educational Leadership Behavior of School Heads Based on Gender

Male			Female			Independent sample t-test	
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	t	P
298	159.01	30.43	282	164.68	30.71	2.032	.043*

*P<.05

Table 4 presents the school teachers' perception of effective educational leadership behavior based on gender. An Independent sample t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. Males were 298 in number. Their mean score was 159.01 and their standard deviation was 30.43. Females were 282 who had a mean score of 164.68 and their standard deviation was 30.71. The test generated a value of 2.032 and the p-value was .043. It indicates that there is a significant difference in the perception of teachers on a gender basis. Male teachers secured a high mean score that shows they gave more strong opinions about the effective educational leadership behavior of their school heads.

Table 5

Comparison between School Teacher Perceptions of Effective Educational Leadership Behavior of School Heads Based on Sector

Public			Private			Independent sample *t*-test	
N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	t	P
322	206.01	36.97	258	148.23	26.09	2.079	.047*

*P<.05

Table 5 demonstrates the perception of school teachers on effective educational leadership behavior on a sector basis. The mean score of teachers in the public sector is 206.01 and the standard deviation is 36.97.

The mean score of the perception of private teachers was 148.23 and the standard deviation was 26.09. Independent sample *t*-test generated a *t*-value of 2.079 and a p-value of .047. A noticeable difference was found between the perceptions of school teachers in the public and private sectors. The teachers of public sector schools have a great perception of the effective educational leadership behavior of the heads of the public schools.

Discussion

This study is an effort to understand the views of school teachers who were the sample of the study about the effectiveness of the educational leadership behavior of their head teacher. The results of the current study match the results of the study by Cakir &Adiguzel (2020). They presented the empirical evidence that school teachers' performance is enhanced by the motivation of the head teacher and it is good to foster an environment of collaboration, cooperation, and motivation for better performance in school.

The results showed that reinforcement by the head teacher of educational leadership has a strong effect on enhancing the performance of the organization. It verifies the results of the study by Haryono et al., (2020) which described the evidence that motivation and reinforcement by the head teacher have a positive correlation with the professional growth of school teachers.

Teachers strongly gave the opinion that their head teachers reinforce them and possess very effective educational leadership behavior. Some new aspects explored by the current study are courage, vision, passion, and persuasion. The score on these factors indicates the fact that they are the key components in shaping effective educational leadership behavior. The study revealed that different demographics such as gender and sector also have noteworthy roles in perceiving effective educational leadership phenomenon. It verifies the facts presented in the literature by Ning et al. (2020) and Shahbal et al. (2021)

proving with statistical evidence that male teachers have a strong perception of the effective educational leadership behavior of their relative school heads as compared to female

teachers. The other dimension that became clear from the results is that heads of Public schools possess a more effective and strong educational behavior according to participants. Perception of teachers of public schools varies from that of private school teachers. It also gives a new dimension for future studies to consider the sector as a potential factor while measuring the opinions of teachers.

Conclusion

Educational leadership is very important in the current educational scenario. Educational institutes especially schools in Pakistan need dynamic and visionary leaders. Effective educational leadership behavior fosters a creative and conducive environment where stakeholders collaborate and share ideas, developing plans for the progress and growth of staff and the school. It is crucial to study all relevant factors of effective educational leadership behavior. Being the first-ever novice study in Pakistani school education setup, it has opened many avenues for further research. Hence this study filled the population gap as well as the empirical gap found in the literature. This study has laid a foundation for further studies on the topic.

Recommendations

This research has laid the foundation for many future research as it recommends the following dimensions.

- It is recommended that stakeholders arrange leadership training programs for nurturing effective leadership characteristics in school education leaders. It is essential to cope with the challenges of the modern and competitive educational world.
- The study recommends strongly considering the effect of demographic characteristics, which are of paramount importance in measuring perception. It must be considered while studying the effective educational leadership behavior of head teachers.
- The results of the study revealed gender disparity in the perception of school teachers. This is a unique aspect. Gender should be considered as a potential factor that plays a role in perceiving effective educational leadership behavior of head teachers.
- Being a maiden study effect of the sector should also be measured. Studying effective educational leadership behavior is very important as ever changing scenario of educational institutes on all levels demands dynamic leadership.

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