Study of Leadership Styles of Principals of Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The present research paper investigates the leadership styles of principals of secondary schools. School Principal plays a pivotal role in enhancing instructional quality, improving student outcomes, and achieving overall school effectiveness. The leadership style exercised by school principals occupies a central position, particularly in secondary schools where academic demands and organizational complexity are comparatively higher. A descriptive survey design was employed, with data collected from 10 principals using Sinha's Leadership Style Scale (1983). Statistical techniques including mean, standard deviation and t-test were applied to test the hypotheses. Results revealed no significant difference in leadership styles of male and female principals. The study highlights the critical role of leadership style in shaping school climate and teacher engagement. Recommendations emphasize the need for adopting democratic and participative leadership approaches to strengthen teacher's motivation, professional satisfaction, and overall school performance.

Keywords: Leadership styles, secondary school and principals.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as the cornerstone of national development, human advancement, and social transformation. In India, secondary education plays a critical role as it bridges foundational learning and higher education while preparing adolescents for meaningful participation in society. Within this educational ecosystem, the principal of the school stands as the administrative and instructional leader, responsible not only for school management but also for shaping the organizational climate, establishing a professional culture, and influencing teacher commitment. Leadership, therefore, is not merely positional authority; rather, it functions as an interactive process involving influence, collaboration, and shared goals (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Concept of Leadership in Educational Settings

Leadership has been broadly defined as the process of influencing individuals or groups to achieve predetermined objectives willingly and enthusiastically. In educational settings, leadership takes on a multifaceted role, encompassing instructional, administrative, managerial, and interpersonal dimensions. According to Hallinger (2003), principals are not

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merely administrators but instructional leaders responsible for shaping school climate, promoting professional growth, and guiding organizational change.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership emphasizes vision building, charisma, intellectual stimulation and individualized support. Leaders inspire followers to transcend their self-interests and align with a shared organizational mission (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Research suggests that transformational principals enhance teacher work motivation, encourage innovation and foster collaborative cultures (Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2003).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning through curriculum oversight, classroom observation, goal-setting, and academic supervision. Blase and Blase (1999) found that when principals provide constructive feedback, encourage reflection, and support professional development, teacher motivation improves significantly.

Task-Oriented Leadership

Sinha's (1983) Leadership Style Scale defines task-oriented leadership as a style focused on achieving work goals through clear instructions, close supervision, and strict adherence to procedures. Leaders high on this dimension emphasize discipline, punctuality, productivity, and timely completion of tasks. They monitor teachers' performance closely and expect compliance with assigned duties. In school settings, a task-oriented principal maintains structured routines and focuses primarily on academic and administrative efficiency.

Democratic/Participative Leadership

Democratic or participative leadership emphasizes shared decision-making and open communication. Teachers feel more valued, respected, and empowered, which enhances professional motivation and job satisfaction (Nadarasa & Thuraisingam, 2014).

Autocratic/Bureaucratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership relies on strict control, unilateral decisions, and rigid organizational rules. While it can ensure order, it frequently leads to decreased teacher motivation, reduced creativity, and increased resistance (Muchina, 2009).

Nurturant Leadership

A leadership style especially noted in Indian contexts, nurturant leadership involves care, concern, and personal attention. Leaders adopt a parental role, balancing authority with warmth and support leading to high teacher loyalty and motivation (Sinha, 1983).

Empirical Studies Related to Principal's Leadership Styles

A large body of research identifies transformational leadership as especially influential in fostering teacher motivation. Transformational leaders articulate a vision, inspire followers, and stimulate intellectual growth (Bass, 1995). Nagarajan (1998) highlighted that autonomy strengthened leadership behavior only in certain types of colleges. Leadership styles such as

participative, democratic, and collegial models enhance intrinsic motivation by providing autonomy and collaborative opportunities (Blase & Blase, 1999). Conversely, authoritarian or bureaucratic styles tend to restrict teacher agency, thereby reducing motivation (Witziers, Bosker & Krügeret, 2003).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) investigated that transformational leadership emphasizes vision building, charisma, intellectual stimulation and individualized support. Further, it was found that such leaders inspire followers to transcend their self-interests and align with a shared organizational missio.

.Muchina (2009) conducted a study in Africa and reported that democratic leadership positively correlates with teacher motivation in Kenyan secondary schools, aligning with the findings of many Indian studies. Further results demonstrated that democratic leadership yields higher motivation levels compared to autocratic or laissez-faire styles. Similarly, Supovitz, Sirinid and May (2010) observed that teachers respond positively to leadership that is supportive, communicative, and participative showing that collaborative leadership fosters teacher inquiry, experimentation, and reflective practices.

Nadarasa and Thuraisingam (2014) discovered that democratic leadership had a strong positive effect on teacher job satisfaction, while autocratic leadership had negative consequences. Dahie, Mohamed and Jim'ale (2015) reported strong positive correlations between transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles and teacher motivation in Mogadishu secondary schools. However, transactional leadership showed the highest direct impact.

Barenge (2016) studying Kenyan primary schools, noted that democratic and participative leadership styles led to higher teacher motivation, while autocratic styles were least effective. Wasserman, Ben-Eli and Gal (2016) studied Israeli schools and found a significant positive relationship between principals' leadership style and teacher's work motivation. Teachers reported higher fulfillment when principals demonstrated supportive, communicative and democratic behaviors.

Jabeen, Arif and Manzoor (2019) found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and teacher motivation in public colleges in Pakistan. Teachers felt more motivated when principals engaged in supportive behaviors, shared visioning and developmental leadership. Siswanto (2020) concluded that participatory leadership significantly influences job satisfaction and work motivation, suggesting the universality of democratic principles in effective leadership.

Overall, literature indicates that leadership significantly shapes teacher motivation. However, variation exists based on cultural context, leadership training and school environment. The present study contributes to this body of knowledge by examining the relationship between leadership styles and teacher's work motivation in the specific sociocultural context of secondary schools of Amritsar.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the leadership styles of principals of secondary schools.

- To compare the leadership styles of male and female principals of secondary schools.

Hypothesis of the Study

- There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of leadership styles of male and female principals of secondary schools.

Research Design

The present study falls under the domain of ' Descriptive Research' within the survey method as it intends to describe and analyze the current status of principals' leadership styles.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of principals of secondary schools of Amritsar district of Punjab state. A sample of 10 principals was selected through purposive sampling. The sample included both male and female participants, representing diverse ages and teaching experiences.

Table 1: School-wise Sample Distribution

S. No.	Name of School	Number of Principal
1	Khalsa College Public School, Amritsar	1
2	Khalsa College Senior Secondary School, Amritsar	1
3	Khalsa College Senior Secondary Girls School, Amritsar	1
4	Amar Jyoti Senior Secondary School	1
5	Alexandra School, Amritsar	1
6	S.B Senior Secondary School, Amritsar	1
7	Prabhakar Senior Secondary School, Amritsar	1
8	Govt. Senior Secondary School, Putlighar, Amritsar	1
9	Govt.Senior Secondary School,Chheharta, Amritsar	1
10	Shri Ram Ashram school, Amritsar	1
	Total	**10**

Tools Used for Data Collection

- Leadership Style Scale (Sinha, 1983)

Statistical Techniques Employed

- Descriptive statistical techniques namely mean, standard deviation and skewness were computed to summarize the data and to describe central tendency and variability of

leadership style scores.

- t-test employed to find out the significant difference between mean scores.

Delimitations of the Study

- The study was confined to secondary schools in Amritsar city only.

- Principals of secondary schools were included in the study.

- A limited sample was drawn due to COVID-19 related constraints and challenges restricting school access and interaction.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Objective: To study the leadership styles of principals of secondary schools

Analysis using Sinha's Leadership Style Scale showed:

- Participative leadership was the most prevalent style.

- A smaller proportion demonstrated Nurturant and Task-Oriented leadership style.

- Bureaucratic leadership style was observed among one principal.

- None demonstrated a purely Authoritarian style.

Objective: To compare leadership styles of male and female principals of secondary schools

This objective was checked with the help of hypothesis which states "There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of leadership styles of male and female principals of secondary schools". This hypothesis was framed to find out difference in the mean scores of leadership styles of male and female principals of secondary schools. The hypothesis has been tested by calculating t-test and results are being reported in table 2.

Table 2: Mean scores of leadership styles of male and female principals

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE_M	t-value
Leadership	Male	6	36.83	3.92	1.60	0.39
Styles	Female	4	36.00	1.63	0.81	

A close scrutiny of the results entered in table 2 indicates that:

- Male principals' mean leadership score = 36.83

- Female principals' mean leadership score = 36.00

Though in leadership styles there exists a difference of 0.83, a very negligible difference, comparing the mean of male and female principals.The calculated t-value is 0.39 which is insignificant at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there exists statistically no significant difference in the mean scores of leadership styles of principals. Hence, hypothesis

which states "There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of leadership styles of male and female principals of secondary schools" stands accepted.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of leadership styles of male and female principals.

Accepted

Results show negligible gender differences in the mean scores of leadership styles which means that male and female principals display similar leadership styles.Literature suggests both male and female leaders are equally capable, though women often exhibit slightly stronger interpersonal orientation (Marjo, 2010).

This supports findings by Cheaupalakit (2002) showing no major gender differences in overall leadership effectiveness, although women often exhibit slightly stronger transformational tendencies.In this study, contextual and organizational factors likely influenced leadership behavior more than gender.

Findings and Conclusion

- No significant difference was found in leadership styles of male and female principals. Both male and female principals demonstrate comparable leadership behavior. Male principals displayed slightly higher mean leadership scores, though not statistically significant.

Educational Implications

- Leadership training programs should emphasize democratic, task-oriented and participative leadership styles.

- Principals should adopt motivation-enhancing practices, such as recognition, collaborative decision-making and professional autonomy.

- Schools should foster a positive organizational climate that values teacher contributions and encourages professional growth.

- Gender-sensitive motivation strategies may be designed to address the varying motivational needs of male and female teachers.

- Policy-makers should consider leadership behavior as a key factor in teacher retention, moral and school effectiveness.

- Regular feedback mechanisms between teachers and administrators enhance transparency and accountability.

Suggestions for Further Research

- Due to COVID-19 related constraints and challenges restricting school access and interaction, this research was carried out only on a small sample of 10 principals.It can be carried out on a large sample to get more reliable results.

➢ The present study was conducted in schools located in Amritsar city only. Perhaps more meaningful outcomes could be achieved by including schools of some other districts and cities.

➢ Future studies may include college and university teachers and leaders for broader generalizability.

➢ Leadership styles can be studied in relation to some other variables like teacher burnout, stress and job satisfaction.

➢ Comparative studies may be undertaken in private versus government schools.

➢ Research may explore the impact of transformational and distributed leadership on motivation.

➢ Longitudinal studies could assess the evolution of leadership styles over time.

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