

Assessing Leadership Roles of Secondary School Principals: Comparison Between Principals and Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

The current study assessed the leadership roles of secondary school heads in Kohat division (SSHKD). The study used a quantitative research design for examining whether principals and teachers interpreted leadership roles differently and whether gender and age have any effect on leadership role of principals or not. A random sample of 60 secondary school principals and 120 Senior School Teachers (S.S.T) from 03 districts of Kohat Division participated in the study. It was found that both teachers and heads perceived that school heads perform their leadership roles effectively and efficiently. However, performing leadership roles by male and female heads viewed differently. Female principals viewed that they perform leadership roles efficiently as compare to their male counterparts. No significant differences were found in the perceptions of principals when compared regarding age. The study recommends pre-service training programs for principals after their selection.

Key Words

Age, Gender, Kohat Division, Principals, Leadership Role, Teacher.

Introduction

Effective leadership plays significant role in school effectiveness. Researches on school effectiveness provide ample evidence that effective and efficient leadership has a positive impact on students' learning outcomes (Leithwood & Steinbach, 2002). According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), successful school leadership guarantees students' learning. Similarly, Liu and Hallinger (2018) believed that leadership in school assures motivation, support, and sustainability of staff development which in turn responsible for school improvement and student learning. It is generally believed school leadership has positive effect on academic outcomes (Morris, 2010). Hallinger and Chen (2015: 57) concluded that "Asian scholars in educational leadership and management remain in the early stages of development". Quantitative research methods have largely been used by many of the scholars. Holligworth, Oslon, Asikin-Garmager, and Winn (2018) concluded that great school principals manage to implement multiple initiatives by empowering staff by cultivating trust, knowing the capabilities of their subordinates very well and engaging staff in open and purposeful communication. Leithwood *et al.*, (2008) talked about the seven famous and important claims about successful leaders. These include influence of leadership on students learning; teachers' performance; high degree of sensitivity about the context in which they work; improving staff performance; distributed leadership; effectiveness of leadership styles and leadership traits and capacities. To the researchers' best knowledge, no research has been carried out at Kohat division to examine how leadership role is interpreted by principals and teachers. To fill this gap, the researchers decided to conduct a study on assessing secondary school principals' leadership roles, which has the following four objectives.

1. To assess the leadership roles of secondary school heads in Kohat division.
2. To compare the perceptions of heads and teachers regarding performing the leadership roles of SSHKD.
3. To compare the perceptions of male and female heads regarding performing the leadership roles of SSHKD.
4. To compare the perceptions of heads regarding performing the leadership roles of SSHKD by age.

Following research hypotheses were formulated to achieve the aforementioned objectives;

1. Perceptions regarding leadership roles of SSHKD are independent of designation (heads and teachers).
2. Heads' perceptions regarding leadership roles of SSHKD are independent of sex.
3. Heads perceptions regarding leadership roles of SSHKD are independent of age.

Literature Review

Educational leadership has been defined by Connolly, James, and Fertig (2017, p.2) as “the process of the act of influencing others in educational settings to achieve goals and necessitates actions of some kind. When those carrying a delegated responsibility act in relation to that responsibility, they influence and are therefore leading”. Leadership can be studied under the headings of four major classes of theories. The names of these theories are trait, behavior, situational and contingency theories. In trait theories the major focus is on the personal and intellectual traits of the leader which differentiate them from their followers (Stogdill, 1948, 1974). In behavioral theories the major focus of the leader is on the achievement of targets, people or subordinates, provision of direction to followers and ensuring active participation in the activities (McGregor, 1960). In situational theories the major focus is on striving to recognize the unique characteristics of the leader in a challenging situation and to determine how the leader tries to get rid of this challenging situation (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). In contingency theories the effectiveness of leader is associated with two important variables, first is related to the leadership style which the leader adopts and second is related to the extent to which the situation is favorable for the leader (Fiedler, 1967).

The effectiveness of leadership can be understood by examining the different roles performed by the leaders. In this context, role can be defined as the expected set of behaviors or activities performed by an individual at his workplace. Therefore, one can assume that managerial roles are similar to leadership roles as studied by Mintzberg (1987) and other researchers. These various roles performed by leaders include negotiators; figureheads; coach; spokesperson; team builder; technical problem solver; team player; and entrepreneur. Clark and Coiling (2005) have identified ten roles of a leader. These are motivation, communication, team management, resource management, knowledge management, time management, change management, stress management, conflict management, and quality management.

Murphy, Louis, and Smylie (2017: 25) mentioned ten core values and suggested that these core values must be evident in the practical life of an educational leader. These standards include “shared mission, vision and core values; ethics and professional norms; equity and culture responsiveness; curriculum, instruction and assessment; community of care and support for students; professional capacity of school personnel; professional community for teachers and staff; meaningful engagement of families and community; operations and management; and school improvement”. If a school leader follows and adopts these professional standards at their workplace, they can ensure the learning of the students which is the ultimate goal.

Salfi (2011) articulated that for successful school leadership, it is necessary that they should focus on the development of vision, mission, and objectives of school; promote an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect; believing in collaboration and try to execute these practically at school. Distributing responsibilities among staff through empowering them, lead others through distributive leadership, involving stakeholders in decision making process, developing and maintaining good relations with community personnel, professional development of staff and community personnel and parents involvement are the activities through which dream of effective leadership can be achieved at school.

Yircia, Özdemirb, Kartal, and Kocabaş (2014) expressed that teachers have positive perceptions about their school principals regarding being knowledgeable, experienced, efficient listeners and setting realistic goals for the staff. On the other hand school heads lack to show empathetic behavior towards their staff, praise subordinates' work, communicate efficiently, providing constructive feedback to staff, motivate staff, and having effective coaching skills.

Khalil, Iqbal, and Khan (2016) found that the transactional leadership style is becoming more popular among secondary school principals at Lahore as compared to transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles. Khan and Shaheen (2016) stated that principals of government and private schools do not play an efficient role in increasing the academic achievement of students. Private secondary school principals' leadership role was found much better than that of public school principals in respect of students' academic achievement. They also found significant differences between trained and untrained principals' leadership role in relation to students' academic achievement. Trained school principals were found more superior as compared to untrained principals in using leadership roles in relation to academic achievement of students.

Shakir, Lodhi, and Zafar (2017) found that secondary school heads efficiently and effectively perform administrative roles and responsibilities to achieve school vision and mission. They also found that the performance of urban school heads was found better in performing general responsibilities, administrative and managerial roles

as compare to rural school heads. The performance of male heads was found better than that of their female counterparts. Riaz and Sultan (2017) found some positive and negative aspects of secondary school leaders. The positive aspects of their leadership include commitment to inculcate good citizenship tact among students; encouraging and believing in teamwork through shared leadership process; trying to improve physical environment of the school, and focusing on co-curricular activities for overall personality development of the students. The negative aspects include giving little attention to academic development; limited teacher collaboration for professional learning; providing limited resources to enrich curriculum and not promoting conducive environment for students learning. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research to underline all those factors which hinder academic leadership role of school headteachers.

Research Methodology

As this study is concerned to assess the present leadership roles of secondary school heads, therefore, the nature of the study was descriptive. The quantitative research design was used to collect and analyze data. It was a cross-sectional type of survey. A survey (questionnaire) was considered as a suitable way to analyze the perceptions of the respondents.

All secondary school heads (191) and senior teachers (382) currently employed in Government Schools of three districts (Kohat, Karak, and Hangu) of Kohat Division during the academic year (2014-15) constituted the accessible population of this study. The researchers selected 60 (31%) school principals and 120 (34%) senior secondary school teachers from the three districts through stratified sampling. Out of 60 heads there were each 30 male and female heads and similarly among 120 SSST, each 60 were male and female.

The Kohat Division was chosen due to three reasons. Firstly, the districts included in this division have a great number of secondary schools; enough for this research. The second reason was that no similar type of research study had been conducted by other researchers in these districts, which shows uniqueness in this regard. The third reason was that two of the researchers belonged to this area, as it was convenient for them to collect data from the aforementioned districts because this project was not a funded project.

A total number of one hundred and eighty survey packets (questionnaires) were distributed among principals and teachers of secondary schools in three districts of Kohat division. Each survey packet was accompanied by a covering letter inviting participation in the survey, describing purposes of study and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity for the institution and teachers. One hundred and eighty filled questionnaires were collected from the respondents. Thus 180 useable questionnaires were used for data analysis with a final response rate of 100%.

The researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of 65 rating type items after going through related literature. The questionnaire was distributed into four sections. The first part of the research instrument deals with heads and teachers' demographic information while the second part comprised 65 items divided into three leadership roles i.e. administrative, supervisory and educator roles. The participants were requested to choose the most appropriate response on the given continuum.

To establish the instrument face and content validity, the researchers initially developed an item bank of 84 questions. Then, the instrument was shown to educational experts who are well qualified and experienced in educational administration, leadership and management areas. This panel of experts consisted of one emeritus professor from the University of Glasgow; four were working as professors in different Pakistani universities; six were working as school heads and ten were performing their duties as SSST in various schools of Kohat Division. The researchers requested the experts to review the instrument through writing comments and give suggestions to eliminate the ambiguity, sentence structuring, designing of the questionnaire on a blank white sheet. They had given valuable suggestions and incorporated by the researchers.

The final refined and modified questionnaire consisted of 65 items based on the Five-Points rating scale was pilot tested on five schools' heads and fifteen teachers which were not included in the sample. They had given satisfactory response. The respondents were then requested to respond to the five points rating scale ranges from always to never. The reliability of the questionnaire was established by finding the value of Cronbach alpha. The Cronbach alpha was calculated for each item as well as for the whole instrument. The Cronbach alpha value for the total items of the questionnaire was found (.86) which shows that the instrument was highly reliable. The reliability values for the leadership roles instrument were found more than that of (0.70) which indicates that the instrument is highly reliable (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 506; Tesfaw, 2014).

Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the data by using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The objective related to assessing the performing of leadership roles of SSHKD was assessed through mean and standard deviation scores. The objective related to compare the views of heads and teachers regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD

was analyzed through independent samples t-test. The objective related to compare the views of male and female heads regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD was analyzed through independent samples t-test. The objective related to compare the views of heads by age regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD was analyzed by one-way ANOVA. The researchers assumed the value of significance as 0.05.

Table 1. Comparing the Mean Scores of two Samples (Heads And Teachers) Concerning Sshkd Leadership Roles

Respondents	Sample size	M	SD	SEM	t	p
Principals	60	3.37	1.313	.169	.470	.639
Teachers	120	3.48	1.191	.153		

The table above shows the values of mean, standard deviation, t-test and the p regarding SSHKD leadership roles. It is evident from the table that the value of p-statistics was found greater than that of the value of significance level 0.05. Therefore, the perceptions of the respondents regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were found the same. Thus, the researchers concluded that the perceptions of heads and teachers regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were not significantly different.

Table 2. Comparing the Mean Scores of two Samples (Male And Female Heads) Concerning Sshkd Leadership Roles

Respondents	Sample size	M	SD	SEM	t	p
Male Principals	30	2.2692	.88549	.16167	12.287	.000
Female Principals	30	4.4840	.43670	.07973		

The table above shows the values of mean, standard deviation, t-test and the p regarding SSHKD leadership roles. It is evident from the table that the value of p-statistics was found less than that of the value of significance level 0.05. Therefore, the perceptions of the respondents regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were found different. Thus, the researchers concluded that the perceptions of male and female heads regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were significantly different. The mean value of female principals was found greater than that of the mean value of male principals, therefore, performing leadership roles of female principals were found better than that of their male counterparts.

Table 3. Effect of Principals' Age on Performing Leadership Role

Principals' age	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	5.582	5	1.116	.626	.680
Within Groups	96.266	54	1.783		
Total	101.849	59			

The table above shows the values of one-way ANOVA (F) and the p regarding SSHKD leadership roles by principals' age. It is evident from the table that the value of p-statistics was found greater than that of the value of significance level 0.05. Therefore, the perceptions of the respondents regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were found the same by age. Thus, the researchers concluded that the perceptions of heads regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD by age were not significantly different. Both young and aged-school principals perform leadership roles nicely.

Discussion

The perceptions of principals and teachers show that secondary school principals perform leadership roles nicely. The findings of the study showed that the perceptions of heads and teachers regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were not significantly different. The study concluded that the perceptions of male and female heads regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD were significantly different. Performing leadership roles of female principals were found better than that of their male counterparts. The findings also revealed no significant difference in performing leadership roles by principals when compared by age. Both young and old school principals perform leadership roles nicely.

The results revealed that both male and female heads perform their leadership roles up to the mark. The perceptions of principals were crossed verified through their senior subordinates SSST, whose views show a confirmation of performing leadership roles by their heads. The study findings revealed that the level of performing leadership roles by heads ranges from moderate to high. Principals assign duties after colleagues, delegate authority, and responsibility to subordinates, initiate activity, assign right job to right person, invite and encourage suggestions from their subordinates, brings changes through research and inquiry, having sense of humour, observe curricular

and co-curricular activities taking place at school, gives instructional tips to teachers, familiar with the performance of teachers in academic and non-academic activities, favours the use of modern technology during instruction, recognize high performance of staff and students, guide teachers in maintain good discipline at school, appreciate in-service teachers training program, favour inter-school competitions, invites educational experts to visit school and concentrate on the harmonious development of students. These responsibilities have been performed by principals nicely and play significant role in the achievement of school goals. These results have been testified by many researchers who conducted researches in different parts of the world and identified the similar roles and responsibilities of principals ineffective schooling (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Salfi, 2011; Shakir, Lodhi & Zafar, 2017; Louis and Smylie, 2017; Riaz & Sultan, 2017; Yircia, Özdemirb, Kartal & Kocabaş, 2014).

The mean principals' leadership role scores by gender show significant differences and observed that female heads perform leadership aspects better than that of their male counterparts. Though both genders try their best to fulfill and contribute successfully to their school improvement. However, female principals were found more conscious, more acrobatic, more careful and more trustworthy than male principals. The results have been found mix in the literature. Some researchers testified similar results (Hallinger, Dongyu & Wang, 2016) while some found no differences in the leadership responsibilities of principals (Shakir, Lodhi & Zafar, 2017; Khan, Saeed & Fatima, 2009) and some found that male principals proved to be good leader than that of their female counterparts (Khan, 2009).

The study results show that the perceptions of heads regarding performing leadership roles of SSHKD by age were not significantly different. Both aged and young principals perform leadership role effectively and efficiently. School principals have to perform similar duties and responsibilities whether they are fresh appointed or senior at the post. They will have to play efficient role in school improvement and effectiveness. Due to this reason there may not be differences in age in performing leadership role.

Conclusions

Based on findings it was concluded that secondary school principals perform leadership roles moderate to a high level. The differentiation between the perceptions of school heads and teachers concerning leadership roles of SSKHD was not significant. Principals' gender has significant effect while performing leadership roles by heads. Female heads perform leadership roles more effectively and efficiently as compare to their male counterparts. Principals' age has no significant effect on performing leadership roles. Thus it is concluded that gender has significant effect on performing leadership roles whereas age has no significant effect on performing leadership roles.

Recommendations

Based on conclusions, recommendations are given to school teachers, principals, stakeholders, and policymakers. Both principals and teachers should ensure shared leadership at school so that they contribute effectively and strive for the achievement of school goals. Secondary school principals should make efforts to arrange in-service and refresher trainings and workshops for their teachers, delegate authority and responsibility to staff appropriately, using of effective and efficient managerial skills for effective schooling, promote supportive culture at school, ensure welcoming environment for community to share their views about school performance, evaluate the performance of teaching staff and students on regular basis, encourage teaching staff to use modern teaching methodology for instruction, encourage shared leadership concept at school, ensuring effective classroom instruction and ultimately strive for student success. For this purpose both teachers and principals should be provided opportunities through refresher and in-service courses to enrich their knowledge regarding their active leadership role for effective schooling. Principals' roles should be recognized and appreciated by different agencies involved in decision making process. Principals through disseminating powers to their subordinates can provide opportunities so that they may be able to be effective when assumed the charge of school. If there is mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among the staff and principals then it will lead to effective schooling.

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