

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF PRINCIPALS IN UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

The current study aimed to examine the leadership style of headmasters in upper primary schools, focusing on gender and regional differences. A null hypothesis was formulated to assess the impact of these variables. The study was confined to headmasters of X medium upper primary schools, with a sample of 295 headmasters selected through stratified random sampling. A descriptive survey method was employed to gather data using both a self-prepared and a standardized leadership style scale. The collected data were analyzed using correlation, mean, standard deviation, standard error of the mean, and t-values. The results indicated that the leadership style of headmasters was influenced by their gender, region, and the gender of headmasters in urban areas. However, the gender of headmasters in rural areas did not have a significant effect on their leadership style.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Leadership Styles, Upper Elementary School etc.

1.1 Introduction

Leadership in education plays a vital role in shaping the quality of teaching, learning and overall school effectiveness. At the upper primary school level, principals serve as critical leaders who influence not only school functioning but also the development and performance of both teachers and students. Their leadership styles directly impact decision-making processes, teacher motivation, student outcomes and the overall school climate. Given the diverse contexts in which schools operate, understanding the leadership styles of principals is crucial to promoting effective educational practices.

The study of leadership styles in educational settings has received significant attention in recent years. Transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership are among the most commonly examined styles in the context of school management. These styles determine how principals manage their schools, motivate their teams and adapt to challenges in different environments. In upper primary schools, where the foundations for advanced education are laid, effective leadership is essential to create a supportive and conducive environment for academic and personal growth.

This comparative analysis focuses on the leadership styles of principals in upper primary schools, with a special emphasis on differences in gender and regional contexts. The aim of the study is to explore how these factors influence the leadership approaches adopted by principals and their effectiveness in achieving educational objectives. By examining these dimensions, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics in diverse school environments, providing insights that can inform policy and professional development programs for school leaders. Leadership is a highly complex phenomenon. Management has a broad set of tasks, which include responsibilities related to schools, students, teachers, and other components of education. Educational research on school effectiveness over the last 30-40 years has designated the principal as a leader as a concept. Recent research on high schools has also focused on the principal as a leader. Emphasizing the principal as a leader may add a new dimension to the traditional, traditional distinction between the dual roles of the principal as a teacher and the principal is expected to act as a leader in the school. In the last few years, researchers have begun to take a serious interest in the area of leadership styles of school principals. Several models and models exist that explain how individuals vary with leadership styles, although there is a wide consensus among leaders and researchers supporting the existence of individual leadership styles among principals. The evolution of leadership styles has assumed a distinct importance and many authorities now believe that the principal's way of administering is perhaps the most important factor in his institutional planning and achievement.

Nowadays the responsibility of administering education in the country is entrusted to many people. While most are from professional background, some have grown up in a school of experience. In recent years the overall approach towards educational leadership has undergone a rapid change. Research in education in general and education in particular, was practically non-existent three or four decades ago, organizations like NCERT, UGC, NUEPA, ICSSR etc. have played an important role in initiating research, documentation and differentiation of educational research through their journals etc.

1.2 Literature Review

Leadership in schools has been widely studied because of its critical role in shaping educational outcomes. Different leadership styles – transformational, transactional and laissez-faire – have been analysed in terms of their impact on school performance, teacher satisfaction and student achievement. Transformational leadership, characterised by inspiration, vision and the ability to motivate others, is often contrasted with transactional leadership, which focuses on tasks, rules and performance-based rewards (Bass, 1985). In upper elementary schools, these styles are particularly influential because of the developmental stage of students and the operational challenges of managing resources and staff.

Leadership Styles in Educational Contexts

Hallinger and Heck (1996) highlighted the importance of instructional and transformational leadership in promoting school effectiveness. Their research demonstrated that leadership styles significantly influence teacher collaboration, professional development and student outcomes. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) further emphasised the role of transformational leadership in improving teacher commitment to change and innovation. This style is often considered important in dynamic educational environments such as upper primary schools, where adaptation and development are crucial.

The Influence of Gender on Leadership Styles

Research on gender and leadership suggests that male and female leaders may exhibit different approaches to leadership due to social expectations and personal experiences. Eagly (2007) found that female leaders often adopt a more democratic and participative leadership style, promoting collaboration and inclusiveness. In contrast, male leaders are more likely to exhibit a directive and task-oriented approach. These differences may influence leadership dynamics in schools and their overall effectiveness.

Regional Differences in Leadership

Regional context also plays an important role in shaping leadership styles. Principals in urban schools with better resources and exposure to diverse ideas often adopt progressive leadership approaches (Harris & Chapman, 2004). In contrast, rural schools, which may face a lack of resources and traditional mindsets, require principals to effectively balance administrative duties with community engagement. This duality makes regional comparisons essential to understanding the nuances of educational leadership.

Evaluating Leadership Styles in Schools

The use of standardized instruments to evaluate leadership styles has been helpful in providing empirical evidence for research. Marks and Printy (2003) used such instruments to integrate transformational and instructional leadership theories, showing their combined effect on school performance. Instruments such as self-assessment questionnaires and teacher feedback forms have been widely used to study leadership styles and their effectiveness in various school settings.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To develop and validate a standardized leadership style scale specifically designed for principals of upper primary schools.
- To examine the leadership styles of principals in upper primary schools concerning their gender.
- To analyze the leadership styles of principals in upper primary schools based on their regional context.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the average scores on the leadership style scale between male and female principals.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the average scores on the leadership style scale between principals from urban and rural areas.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the average scores on the leadership style scale between male and female principals in urban areas.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the average scores on the leadership style scale between male and female principals in rural areas.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

- The study is limited to principals of upper primary schools, and its findings may not be generalized to principals of primary or secondary schools.
- The sample size, though carefully selected, may not represent the entire population of upper primary school principals across different regions.
- The research focuses only on gender and region as variables influencing leadership styles, excluding other potentially significant factors such as age, educational qualifications, or years of service.
- The leadership style scale developed and used in the study might not capture all dimensions of leadership behavior comprehensively.
- The study relies on self-reported data from principals and teachers, which may be subject to personal biases or inaccuracies.
- Cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional differences that could impact leadership styles were not explicitly considered in the analysis.
- The findings are based on the educational context of a specific region, which may limit their applicability to other regions with different educational policies and practices.
- External factors, such as governmental policies, community involvement, and resource availability, were not factored into the assessment of leadership styles and their effectiveness.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher had decided to study the leadership styles of the principals of X medium upper primary schools of Rajasthan state. Hence, all the principals of upper primary schools were considered as the population of the present study.

A total of 158 male principals (76 from urban area and 82 from rural area) and 137 female principals (66 from urban area and 71 from rural area) were selected from the state of Rajasthan. Thus, a total of 295 principals were selected.

As the research was related to data collection and analysis, descriptive survey method was selected.

The following instruments were used to collect data for the present study.

1. To know the leadership styles “Leadership Style Scale” prepared and standardized by the researcher was used for the present study.
2. Verbal-Non-Verbal Intelligence Test prepared by Dr. K.G. Desai was used for the validity of the leadership style scale.

1.7 Result Analysis

The following statistical method was used for data analysis

1. Mean and standard deviation
2. Percentage
3. Correlation, Percentage rank, T-score
4. T-value (critical ratio)

The entire calculation was done with computer with the help of Microsoft Excel program. Tables according to variables given in Table-1

Table-1: Values of data analysis according to variables

Hypothesis No.	Variable	N	Mean	SD	SD ²	SE D	M. Diff	T Value	Significant nt Level
Ho ₁	Male	149	157.8	34.93	1220.31	3.98	8.90	2.24	0.05
	Female	146	166.7	33.37	1113.37				

Ho ₂	Area	Urban Area	14 2	157.8 3	34.7 7	1208.9 5	3.9 9	8.43	2.11	0.05
		Rural Area	15 3	166.2 6	33.6 6	1133.0 0				
Ho ₃	Urban Area	Male	72	148.4 9	35.4 8	1258.7 3	5.6 2	18.96	3.37	0.01
		Female	70	167.4 4	31.4 6	989.93				
Ho ₄	Rural Area	Male	77	166.5 1	32.2 7	1041.4 9	5.4 6	0.49	0.09	NS

Based on Table-1, a significant difference was observed in the leadership styles concerning the gender and region of principals in urban areas and between male and female principals. However, no significant difference was identified in the gender of principals in rural areas.

Female principals demonstrated a more effective leadership style compared to male principals, indicating that the gender of upper primary school principals influences their leadership approach.

Principals in rural upper primary schools exhibited better leadership styles than those in urban schools, suggesting that the region plays a role in shaping the leadership styles of principals.

Among urban principals, female leaders displayed a more effective leadership style than their male counterparts, highlighting the influence of gender in urban settings on leadership styles.

In rural areas, the leadership styles of male and female principals were found to be similar, indicating that gender does not have a significant impact on leadership styles in rural settings.

1.8 Conclusion and Future Works

Conclusion

The study highlights significant insights into the leadership styles of principals in upper primary schools, emphasizing the influence of gender and regional factors. Female principals generally exhibited more effective leadership styles than their male counterparts, particularly in urban settings, where gender was found to play a decisive role. Conversely, in rural areas, no significant differences were observed between male and female principals, suggesting that gender may be less influential in these contexts. Furthermore, principals in rural schools displayed better leadership styles compared to those in urban schools, underscoring the potential impact of the regional environment on leadership approaches. These findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of how demographic and environmental factors shape leadership effectiveness in the education sector.

Future Work

Future research can expand the scope of this study by exploring additional factors such as age, years of experience, and educational qualifications to provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics. Comparative analyses across different school levels, such as primary and secondary schools, could further elucidate variations in leadership styles. Moreover, incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews and case studies, would provide deeper insights into the contextual and personal factors influencing leadership. Investigating the relationship between leadership styles and student outcomes or teacher performance could also enhance the practical applicability of the findings. Lastly, extending the study to diverse geographical regions and cultural contexts would improve the generalizability and relevance of the research.

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