

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS PERCEIVED BY THEMSELVES AND THEIR TEACHERS IN RELATION TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract:

In this study, the researcher aimed to examine the leadership styles of secondary school principals in relation to school effectiveness. The study focused on the theories of transformational and transactional leadership styles. It is a descriptive research in which the leadership styles of principals were analyzed based on perceptions from both the principals themselves and the teachers, considering their experience and gender. Questionnaires on leadership style and school effectiveness were administered to 42 principals and 608 teachers in the Ajmer region of Rajasthan. The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that there were no significant differences in the leadership styles and school effectiveness of principals based on their experience or gender.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Academic, Region, Gender etc.

1.1 Introduction

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of educational institutions, particularly in secondary schools where the development of students and the overall academic environment is directly influenced by the leadership practices of school principals. Effective school leadership is crucial in fostering an environment conducive to student learning, staff motivation, and overall school performance. In this context, the leadership style of secondary school principals becomes a key factor in determining the success of a school.

Leadership styles, broadly categorized into transformational and transactional approaches, reflect how principals interact with teachers, make decisions, and implement strategies that affect school outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their staff by fostering a vision for the future, encouraging innovation, and promoting a supportive school culture. In contrast, transactional leaders focus on structured goals, rewards, and performance-based outcomes, emphasizing discipline and task completion.

This study aims to explore the leadership styles of secondary school principals as perceived by both the principals themselves and their teachers, while also examining the relationship between these leadership styles and school effectiveness. By considering factors such as the experience and gender of the teachers, the study seeks to offer insights into how leadership perceptions align with school performance outcomes. Understanding these dynamics is essential for improving educational leadership practices and fostering a school environment that supports both teacher development and student success.

‘As we look to the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.’ – Bill Gates

The success of an organization usually depends on the effective management of its leader. No organization can ever succeed without an effective and inspiring leader who can motivate his followers to work towards fulfilling the group’s vision. Thus, the key to high achievement lies in consistency and coherence among three elements; the leader’s personal values, the leader’s aspirations for the organization and the leader’s actions (John Story, 2004, p. 44).

Out of the many theories proposed, the current study takes into consideration transactional and transformational theories.

The transactional theory was first described by sociologist Max Weber in 1947, and was further explored by Bernard M. Bass in the early 1980s. According to it, leadership is based on a system of rewards and

punishments. The transactional leadership style is composed of three dimensions such as contingency ward, active management-by exception and passive management-by exception. The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by James McGregor Burns (1978). The transformational leadership style is known as one of the effective leadership styles in recent theories. It is composed of four dimensions, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Storey, 2004). Apart from these transactional and transformational leadership constructs, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1989) also measures a non-leadership dimension known as laissez-faire. The main issue of this study was to find out how the leadership style adopted by the principals of secondary schools in Greater Mumbai was perceived by themselves and teachers in relation to school effectiveness.

1.2 Literature Review

Leadership within educational settings, particularly in secondary schools, has long been recognized as a key determinant of school effectiveness. The leadership style adopted by school principals can have a profound impact on various aspects of school functioning, including teacher motivation, student achievement, and overall school culture. Over the years, researchers have explored different leadership styles, particularly transformational and transactional leadership, and their effects on school effectiveness. The literature suggests that the alignment between principals' leadership styles and teachers' perceptions of these styles can provide valuable insights into how leadership influences school outcomes.

Transformational Leadership and School Effectiveness

Transformational leadership, as described by Bass (1985), is characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate followers through a shared vision, individualized attention, and intellectual stimulation. Studies have shown that transformational leadership is associated with high levels of teacher satisfaction, improved academic performance, and a positive school culture. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) argue that transformational leaders create a supportive environment that fosters collaboration, professional development, and student-centered practices. This style encourages innovation and motivates teachers to go beyond their immediate job responsibilities, leading to enhanced school effectiveness.

Research by Robinson (2007) suggests that transformational leadership also plays a critical role in building teacher commitment and improving classroom instruction. Principals who exhibit transformational qualities, such as promoting professional growth and maintaining high expectations, contribute to greater teacher effectiveness, which ultimately impacts student achievement. Moreover, transformational leadership has been found to create a shared vision for school improvement, fostering a collective sense of responsibility for academic success.

Transactional Leadership and School Effectiveness

In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on structured tasks, clear expectations, and reward-based systems. Bass (1985) highlights that transactional leaders prioritize stability, compliance, and the achievement of specific goals through rewards and punishments. While transactional leadership may be effective in maintaining order and ensuring that teachers meet specific performance standards, studies suggest that it may have a limited impact on fostering long-term improvements in school culture and student achievement.

However, some researchers argue that transactional leadership is still relevant in certain contexts. For instance, schools undergoing change or those facing significant challenges may benefit from a transactional approach, which provides clear expectations and measurable outcomes. Studies by Harris and Chapman (2004) suggest that transactional leadership can complement transformational leadership in achieving both short-term objectives and long-term educational goals, particularly in environments where structured guidance is needed.

Perception of Leadership Styles

The perceptions of leadership styles by both principals and teachers are crucial in understanding how leadership impacts school effectiveness. Teachers' views on their principals' leadership can influence their motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. Research by Hallinger and Heck (1996) highlights that when teachers perceive their principal's leadership as supportive and visionary, they are more likely to feel engaged and committed to the school's goals. On the other hand, when teachers perceive leadership as

authoritarian or rigid, their morale and job satisfaction may decrease, affecting the overall effectiveness of the school.

Studies by Marks and Printy (2003) emphasize the importance of congruence between principals' self-perceptions and teachers' perceptions of leadership. When there is alignment between how principals view their leadership style and how teachers perceive it, there tends to be a more cohesive and productive school environment. Conversely, mismatches in perception can lead to conflicts, decreased collaboration, and lower overall school effectiveness.

Impact of Experience and Gender

Research has also explored the influence of teachers' experience and gender on their perceptions of leadership. Gender differences in leadership perceptions have been a topic of interest in educational research. Some studies have suggested that female teachers may perceive leadership styles differently than male teachers, particularly in terms of communication and interpersonal relationships. For instance, female teachers may place more value on transformational leadership behaviors, such as empathy and support, compared to their male counterparts (Eagly, 2007).

Experience also plays a significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions of leadership. Experienced teachers may have more developed expectations of leadership and may be more critical in evaluating the leadership style of their principals. In contrast, less experienced teachers may be more adaptable and willing to align with the leadership style, particularly if it offers clear guidance and structure (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. The objectives of this study, based on the formulated hypotheses, are as follows:
2. To examine if there is any significant difference in the leadership style of principals with respect to their experience, specifically comparing principals with less than 5 years of experience and those with more than 5 years of experience.
3. To investigate if there is a significant difference in the leadership style of principals as perceived by teachers, based on the gender of the teachers (male and female).
4. To explore if there is a significant difference in school effectiveness as perceived by principals themselves, based on their years of experience (less than 5 years and more than 5 years).
5. To determine if there is a significant difference in school effectiveness as perceived by teachers, based on the gender of the teachers (male and female).

1.4 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the leadership style of principals with respect to their experience
 - (i) Less than 5 years
 - (ii) More than 5 years
2. There is no significant difference in the leadership style of principals as perceived by teachers with respect to their gender:
 - (i) Male
 - (ii) Female
3. There is no significant difference in school effectiveness as perceived by themselves with respect to their experience:
 - (i) Less than 5 years
 - (ii) More than 5 years
4. There is no significant difference in school effectiveness as perceived by teachers with respect to their gender:
 - (i) Male
 - (ii) Female

1.5 Methodology

The present research was conducted as a controlled quantitative research study in which data was collected from secondary school principals and teachers from the same school.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In the present study, 42 principals and 608 teachers from 42 schools were selected based on stratified random sampling technique.

Instruments

The following prepared instruments were used:

- (a) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ, Form 5X, Short, Bass, & Avolio, 1997)
- (b) NCA School Improvement Questionnaire (Liangxintal, 2002)

1.6 Data Analysis

For the present study, the descriptive statistics used were mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. Inferential statistics were used for comparison of means.

Test of Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the leadership style of principals as perceived by themselves with respect to their experience

- (i) Less than 5 years
- (ii) More than 5 years

Table 1 shows the significance of means of leadership style of principals as perceived by themselves with respect to the experience of principals.

Table 1: Comparison of Perception Scores of Leadership Style by Self

LS	Group	N	df	Mean	SD	t	Level of Significance
TF	Less than 5yrs	9	40	3.404	0.338	0.050	Not Significant (p = 0.960)
	More than 5 yrs	33		3.411	0.405		
TS	Less than 5yrs	9	40	2.750	0.247	0.986	Not Significant (p = 0.330)
	More than 5 yrs	33		2.596	0.448		
LF	Less than 5yrs	9	40	0.824	0.503	2.998	Very Significant (p = 0.005)
	More than 5 yrs	33		0.318	0.434		

(LS: Leadership style, TF: Transformational style, TS: Transactional style, LF: Laissez-faire style)

(a) From Table 1, it is observed that the t-ratios for transformational and transactional styles are not significant. Hence, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

(b) However, for the laissez-faire style, the t-ratio is very significant at 0.005. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

2. There is no significant difference in the leadership styles of principals with respect to their gender among teachers:

- (i) Male
- (ii) Female

Table 2 shows the significance of the means of leadership styles of principals with respect to the gender of teachers.

Table 2: Comparison of perception scores of leadership styles by teachers

LF	Group	N	df	Mean	SD	t	Level of Significance
TF	Males	124	606	3.139	0.598	1.209	Not Significant (P = 0.227)
	Females	484		3.211	0.584		
TS	Males	124	606	2.761	0.521	1.409	Not Significant (P = 0.159)
	Females	484		2.687	0.524		
LF	Males	124	606	1.048	0.938	3.185	Very Significant (P = 0.002)
	Females	484		0.753	0.917		

(a) From Table 2 it can be seen that the t-ratios for transformational and transactional styles are not significant. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

(b) However, for the laissez-faire style, the t-ratio is very significant at 0.002. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

3. There is no significant difference in school effectiveness perceived by self with respect to their experience:

- (i) Less than 5 years
- (ii) More than 5 years

Table 3 shows the significance of the mean scores of school effectiveness perceived by self with respect to their experience:

Table 3: Comparison of Perception Scores of School Effectiveness by Self

SE	Group	N	df	Mean	SD	t	Level of Significance
AC	Less than 5 yrs	9	40	3.962	0.492	0.083	Not Significant (P = 0.934)
	More than 5 yrs	33		3.948	0.429		
IS	Less than 5 yrs	9	40	4.047	0.472	0.716	Not Significant (P = 0.479)
	More than 5 yrs	33		3.931	0.421		

(SE: School Effectiveness, AC: Academic Domain, IS: Infrastructure Domain)

(a) Table 3 indicates that the t-ratios for academic as well as infrastructure domain are not significant. Hence, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

2. There is no significant difference in the perception of school effectiveness by teachers with respect to their gender:

- (i) Male
- (ii) Female

Table 4 shows the significance of the mean score of school effectiveness perceived by teachers with respect to their gender

Table 4: Comparison of Perception Scores of School Effectiveness by Teachers

SE	Group	N	df	Mean	SD	t	Level of Significance
AC	Males	124	606	4.152	0.530	0.321	Not Significant (P = 0.749)
	Females	484		4.167	0.459		
IS	Males	124	606	4.002	0.489	0.860	Not Significant (P = 0.390)
	Females	484		4.045	0.497		

(a) Table 4 shows that the t-ratios for the academic and infrastructure sector are not significant. Hence, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

1.7 Findings and Discussion

1(a) There is no significant difference in the perception scores of transformational and transactional style of leadership experienced by the principals themselves with respect to their experience.

(b) There is significant difference in the perception scores of laissez-faire style of leadership experienced by the principals themselves with respect to their experience.

The principals do not feel that their transformational and transactional styles differ with respect to experience. However, the perception of principals with less than 5 years of experience is higher than the perception of principals with more than 5 years of experience in terms of laissez-faire style. This may be due to the fact that, with experience they start believing that they have become more responsible.

2(a) There is no significant difference in the perception of transformational and transactional style of principals with respect to gender by teachers.

(b) There is no significant difference in the perception of the laissez-faire style of leadership of principals by teachers with respect to gender.

Teachers do not feel that their principals differ from females in transformational and transactional style. However, the perception of male teachers is higher than that of female teachers in terms of laissez-faire style. This is probably because male teachers do not interact with their principals as frequently as female teachers do. 3. There is no significant difference in the perception scores in the area of pedagogical and infrastructure perceived by the principals themselves based on their experience.

The principals' perception about the effectiveness of their school does not differ with respect to experience.

4. There is no significant difference in the perception scores in the area of pedagogical and infrastructure perceived by the teachers with respect to the gender of the teachers.

The teachers' perception about the effectiveness of their school does not differ with respect to gender.

1.8 Conclusion & Future Work

Conclusion

The leadership style of the head of the organisation is an important aspect that should be studied and researched. With the recent changes in the education system and the everyday challenges faced by the organization, it becomes even more important to expect able leadership from the school head. The study on leadership styles of secondary school principals, as perceived by both the principals themselves and their teachers, in relation to school effectiveness has provided valuable insights into the role of leadership in educational outcomes. The findings suggest that the leadership style adopted by principals plays a significant role in shaping the school environment, influencing both the teachers' perceptions of their principals and the overall effectiveness of the school. The study found that principals' experience and teachers' gender do not lead to significant differences in their perceptions of leadership styles or school effectiveness, implying that factors beyond experience and gender might be more influential in shaping these perceptions.

Additionally, the research highlights the importance of alignment between principals' self-perceptions of their leadership style and teachers' perceptions of the same. This alignment fosters a more cohesive and effective school environment, which is crucial for improving teacher performance and student outcomes. The study also underscores that leadership style, whether transformational or transactional, plays an essential role in driving school effectiveness, with a clear need for principals to adapt their leadership approaches to meet the diverse needs of their staff and students.

Future Work

Future research could explore a broader range of factors that influence perceptions of leadership and school effectiveness, such as the socioeconomic context of the school, the role of community involvement, or the impact of professional development programs for principals. It may also be beneficial to conduct longitudinal studies to track how leadership styles evolve over time and how they affect school effectiveness in the long term. Moreover, investigating the specific strategies employed by principals to foster school effectiveness, and how these strategies differ by school type or context, would provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play. Finally, future studies could consider the role of other demographic factors, such as the educational background of principals or the school's level of autonomy, in shaping perceptions of leadership and its impact on school outcomes.

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