

Do Qualification, Experience and Age Matter for Principals Leadership Styles?

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The work presented in the manuscript is a result of original research conducted by Department of Education Hazara University Mansehra Pakistan. This research was not supported by any organization. Furthermore, this research is has not been submitted anywhere for publication.

DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v3-i7/63>

Published Date: 20 July 2013

Abstract

The main focus of present study was to find out the prevalent leadership styles of principals in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to find relationship of leadership styles with qualifications, age and experience of the principals. On the basis of analyzed data, four major leadership styles of the principals were identified as Eclectic, Democratic, Autocratic, and Free-rein. However, a small proportion of the principal had no dominant leadership style. This study shows that principals' leadership styles have no significant correlation with age, experience and qualification.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Eclectic, Democratic, Autocratic, and Free-rein styles, Age, Experience and Qualification.

1. Introduction

Every nation has its own ideology of life, and on the basis of this ideological life it runs the educational system. Assurance of effective educational process rests upon the academic leader. In the Girja's views a "Leader" is an individual who leads the community or a group

of persons joined for a common purpose. A leader is obeyed, heard and honored by his followers. A perfect leader unifies and embodies the opinion of the people and nobilities to any desired goal. The Leading is the process of influencing other to act to accomplish specified objectives and the way a person handles himself is called style (Sheikh 2001). Principal is hub of all the educational efforts and therefore he has to play the role of organizer, leader, governor, business director, coordinator, teacher, guide, philosopher and friend (Sheikh, 2001). Yukl (2004) has stated leadership as act of influencing subordinates to accomplish organizational goals through authority. Adeyemi and Brlarinwa (2013) have defined leadership as “the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of objects” (p-187). An effective schools is that in which the principal and his team can achieve this goal of upholding the system concerning the nature and purpose of the school and are bonded together by the belief that student achievement can best be attained through a common mission, common goals and shared governance (Ogden and Germinario, 1994). Since ages, society has been making heavy demands on the school principal that he should be a man of character, an excellent organizer, a skilled administrator, a model teacher (Kochhar, 1991).

The principal is the bedrock in the school administration and education efforts. What the main spring is to the watch, the flywheel to the machine or the engine to the steamship, the principal is to school. The work of principal is highly complex and much important in any education system. A number of basic characteristics are associated with an effective leadership. These may include expertise, interpersonal styles, ability to manage group, time management etc. (Duemer, Christopher, Hardin, Lezlie, Rogers, and Spiller, 2004). Choi (2007) adds vision, courage, symbolism, sacrifice, and citizen participation as vital characteristics of democratic leadership. Norris (1990) stated that leadership is effective when the leader has sufficient knowledge of educational theories and principles, able to analyze the prevailing situation in the perspective of future, problem identifier, innovator, problem solver, facilitator and manager. Effective principal is a person who practically involves himself into the instructional life of the school, he is more in the classroom and less in the office, he is committed to his profession, he devotes himself more on teaching and learning than on financial business, he uses achievement data for planning further. As an implication, it is seen that some forms of behaviours contribute to administrator’s affectivity such as time management, instructional management, supervision, institutional planning (Kalra, 1997).

The way in which he plays his role either as principal or leader, shapes how he/she thinks, acts and feels in the school (Sheikh, 2001). According to Yukl (2004), the process of influencing subordinates may be applied by groups or individuals. This aspect reflects the leadership (continuum) pattern or styles. A leader follows a set of regulations that form his or her unique leadership style that reflects leader’s personality and character (George, 2004). Experts in the field of leadership have classified the leadership styles in different ways on the basis of different theories of leadership. One classification appears as autocratic, democratic and laissez faire leadership styles (Adeyemi, 2004). An autocratic leader is also referred to as authoritarian leader. He/she is always in practice to dictate command and order that the subordinate have to comply. He/she communicates to employees what is minimally required (Bass, 1990). A leader with democratic leadership style gives priority to participation in policy making process so that each individual of the organization feels himself/herself as an important member of the organization (Adeyemi, 2007). On the other hand, a leader with

laissez-faire leadership style may leave the subordinate free to make decision and exercise powers. The leader's role is confined to simply and he/she has least role and participation in the decisions made by group in the organization (Ogunsanwo, 2000).

Goleman (2002) on the basis of previous studies has claimed that different leadership styles have diverse effects on organizational variables like clarity and commitment of workers, sense of responsibility in organizational climate. Reconstruction of organization, setting, directions for subordinates, and motivating and developing people are the common practices of successful principals (Jacobson, 2011). Therefore, school leaders directly or indirectly affect the various aspects of school and classroom process along with academic performance (Sammons, Gu, Day and Ko, 2011). Each of the style (autocratic, democratic, and free-rein) may have benefits as well limitations.

Over a period of time, a leader switches from one style to the other using all of these styles. However, one of these is the democratic area of application (Waqar & Saddiqi, 2009). For education reforms to succeed, principal as gatekeeper must be skilled and hence he needs for continuous educational development (Nusbuga, 2009). Effective schools meet human needs, get things done, negotiate an arrangement between existing factions, and create meaningful environment for those who enter to learn, and give them reinforcement for the achievements of objectives. Effective principals are those who focus time and attention on each of these areas. They see a school as a family, as a factory, and as a carnival (Greenfield, 1991).

Cagle (1988) has regarded age, experience, education, and size of the institution as factor of leadership style. Katozai (2005) argued that knowledge is a chief weapon in the hand of principal and therefore he/she should be a qualified man. A principal must be equipped with knowledge about methods of teaching, organization, educational psychology and hygienic principles. He should have up-to-date knowledge of the theories and principles of education presented by modern educationists. Nsubuga (2009) has recommended that a continuous professional development (CPD) system for principals be established and institutionalized in the education system. Nsubuga (2009) concluded that unless principals are well equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership, they would not be able to improve school performance significantly. According to Amanchi (1998), education results in more professional impetus and hence specialized training empowers for improved performance in educational institutions.

Besides professional and academic knowledge, it is common belief that age and experience may play very important role in leadership behavior. In most of the cultures, there is a myth that as people get older they become wiser due more exposure and experience. For example in African culture, experience is considered as function of age and therefore older peoples are given priority for leadership positions in different organizations (Ahiazu, 1989). Same myths are prevalent in Pakistani culture. Gronn (1986) believed that leadership style is rooted in the condition of workplace and less dependent upon whole-of-life learning, personality attributes or experience. However, Trompenaars (1993) viewed that leadership styles differ from culture to culture and country to country depending upon life patterns, beliefs and value system. Due to a typical organizational setup in Pakistan, it was considered very important to investigate the relationship of age, experience and qualification with the leadership styles of secondary school principals. Therefore a study was conducted to identify the prevalent leadership styles of principals of Government Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa.

The objectives of the study were:

- To identify different leadership styles of Principals of Government Secondary & Higher Secondary Schools of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa using self perception of the principals about their leadership styles.
- To find out the relationship of qualification of principals with their leadership styles.
- To find out the association between experience and leadership styles of principals.
- To find out the association between age and leadership styles of principals.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out on a sample of 144 principals from 12 out of 24 Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Using stratified random sampling technique, 96 male (48 from urban and 48 from rural schools) and 48 female (24 from urban and 24 from rural schools) principals were selected as sample of study. At first stage, 12 schools were selected from each district (six were from rural and six were from urban areas) and out of these 12 schools, 08 schools were for boys' and 04 were for girls.

In the data collection process, a rating scale on five point Likert scale was used to identify the leadership styles of principals and selected demographic variables were also included in this scale. Judgmental validation was used for validating this scale. To find out reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated and its value was found to be 0.778. The finalized scale was administered to the sample principals and data was collected with 85.41% response rate and hence 32 female and 91 male principals provided complete responses. For the identification of leadership style of each individual, process adopted by (Don Clark, 2002) was followed. Garcia, and Sanchez (2009) have also justified that measures of central tendency had been used in a number of studies as cut-off points for identifying leadership styles. Principals' responses were analyzed to get mean score of each individual in a specific leadership style and the total mean of each style was obtained. A principal obtaining a score equal or above mean on a particular style was assigned that style. For example, if the mean of democratic style came to be 78, then all principals with democratic mean score equal to or more than 78 were designated as principals having democratic style. Similarly leadership styles were determined for all the principals. During this process some principals appeared to have score above mean in all the three styles and some principals appeared to have score below mean in all the three styles. The first category was designated as Eclectic Leadership style and the second category was designated as having no leadership style. The principals having no leadership style were not included in further analysis. Hence four major leadership styles i.e. Eclectic, Democratic, Autocratic and Free-rein were identified. Furthermore 4 principals did not provide data regarding their age and 8 left the entries blank for their experience. These cases were also eliminated in the corresponding analysis. As the results of only 96 schools were available, only 96 principals were considered in case of experience and schools academic performance.

4. RESULTS

The data regarding principals, demographics and different leadership practices were analyzed to identify different leadership styles and their relationship with qualification, experience and age was determined. This analysis is demonstrated in the following tables:

Table 1: Identified Leadership Styles of Principals of Government Schools of KP

SN	Leadership styles	N	Percentage
1	Eclectic	26	21.13
2	Democratic	50	40.65
3	Autocratic	18	14.63
4	Free-rein	10	8.13
5	No-Style	19	15.44
	Total	123	100

The table 1 shows that out of 123 principals, 21.13% were identified to have eclectic, 40.65% to have democratic, 14.63% to have autocratic and 8.13% to have free-rein leadership styles, whereas 15.44% were identified to have no leadership style.

Table 2: Qualification wise Distribution of Leadership Style of Principals

Styles	Eclectic		Democratic		Autocratic		Free-rein		No-Style		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PhD	-	-	01	0.81	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	0.81
M.Phil	-	-	01	0.81	-	-	01	0.81	-	-	02	1.62
M.Ed												
MA	25	20.32	43	34.95	16	13.00	09	7.31	19	15.44	112	91.02
B.Ed	-	-	05	4.06	02	1.62	-	-	-	-	07	5.69
F.A												
F.Sc	01	0.81	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	100
Total	26	21.1	50	40.63	18	14.63	10	8.13	19	15.44	123	99.93

The table shows qualification wise distribution of leadership styles. Out of a total of 123 principals, only one principal was PhD and identified as having democratic style. Two principals were M.Phil, one having democratic style and the other free-rein style. Among the 112 possessing master degrees, 20 % were having eclectic style, 35% were democratic style, 13% having autocratic style, 7% having free-rein style and 15% having no style. Seven principals possessed B.Ed degree and out of these five were having democratic style, two were having autocratic style. There was only one principal with F.A/ F.Sc qualification having eclectic style.

Table 3 Correlation between scores in Leadership Styles and Qualification

Leadership Styles	N	Professional Qualifications	Academic Qualifications	Professional Academic Qualification	+
Eclectic Leaders	26	-0.178	0.408*	0.168	
Democratic Leaders	50	-0.150	-0.341*	-0.286	
Autocratic Leaders	18	-0.138	0.223	0.009	
Free-rein Leaders	10	0.469	-0.503	0.093	

*Significant at 0.05 level.

The data of the table shows the correlation between the leadership styles scores and principals qualification. For the eclectic style, correlation between principals’ leadership styles scores and their professional qualification comes out to be -0.178 which is negative and not significant. However the correlation in case of academic qualification comes out to be 0.408 which is significant at 0.05 level. The overall correlation between leadership style scores and professional and academic qualifications comes out to be 0.168 which is not significant at 0.05 level. For democratic style, the correlation comes out to be -0.150 for professional qualification which is negative and not significant but its value is -0.341 for academic qualification which is also negative and significant at 0.05 level. The overall correlation of this style comes out to be -0.286 and is not significant. All these correlations were negative. For autocratic style the correlation between principals, self perception scores and their professional qualification comes out to be -0.138 which is negative and not significant at 0.05 level. For academic qualification it comes out to be 0.223 which is also not significant and the overall correlation comes out to be 0.009 which is low and not significant. And for principals with free-rein style, correlation for professional qualification comes out to be 0.469 which is not significant but for academic qualification it comes out to be 0.093 which is also not significant at 0.05 level.

Table 4
Experience wise Distribution of Leadership Style of Principals

	Styles	Eclectic		Democratic		Autocratic		Free-rein		Totals	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Year wise Experience	1 to 4	13	27.08	27	56.25	05	10.41	03	06.25	48	100
	5 to 10	04	14.81	12	44.44	09	33.33	02	07.40	27	100
	11 & 06									21	
	above		28.57	09	42.85	02	09.52	04	19.04		100

The table shows the experience wise distribution of principals’ leadership styles. Of the total 96 principals, 48(50%) had experience of 4 years or less, of these 13 (27.08 %) had eclectic, 27 (56.25 %) democratic style, 05 (10.41%) autocratic and, 03 (06.25%) free-rein leadership style. Out of total 96 principals, 27(100%) had experience between 5 to 10 years, of these 04 (14.81%) were having eclectic, 12 (44.44%) democratic, 09 (33.33%) autocratic and, 02 (07.40%) were having free-rein leadership style. Out of the total 96 principals, 21(100%) had experience of 11 years or above, of these 06 (28.57%) were identified as having eclectic style, 09 (42.85%) as having democratic style, 02 (09.52%) were having autocratic leadership style and 04 (19.04%) were having free-rein leadership style.

Table 5
Association between Experience and leadership styles of the Principals.

Leadership Styles	Up to 4 years	Experience		Total
		5 to 10 years	Above 10 years	
Eclectic	13 (11.5)	4 (6.5)	6 (5.03)	23
Democratic	27 (24)	12 (13.5)	9 (10.5)	48
Autocratic	5 (8)	9 (4.5)	2 (3.5)	16

Free-rein	3 (4.5)	2 (2.53)	4 (1.97)	9
Total	48	27	21	96

=11.02

The calculated value of chi square comes out to be 11.02. This is less than the table value with 6 df i.e. 12.59. This means that there is no significant association between the leadership style of the principals and the experience of the principals.

Table 6: Age wise Distribution of Leadership Style of Principals

	Styles	Eclectic		Democratic		Autocratic		Free-rein		Totals	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age wise	21-30	2	50	1	25	-	-	1	25	4	100
	31-40	1	10	5	50	2	20	2	20	10	100
	41-50	8	18.18	22	50	9	20.45	5	11.36	44	100
	51-60	14	33.33	20	47.61	6	14.28	2	04.76	42	100

The table shows the age wise distribution of leadership styles of principals of schools. Out of total 100 principals, 04 principals were in between 21 to 30 years of age, of these 02(50%) were having eclectic leadership style, 01(25%) were having democratic style, and 1(25%) were having free-rein leadership style. Out of total 100 principals, 10 principals were in between 31-40 years of age, of these 01(10%) had eclectic leadership style, 05(50%) had democratic styles, 02 (20%) had autocratic style, and 02 (20%) had free-rein leadership styles. Out of total 100 principals, 44 were 41-50 years of age, of these 08 (18.18%) were identified as having eclectic leadership styles, 22 (50%) as having democratic leadership styles, 09(20.45%) as having autocratic leadership style, and 05 (11.36%) leaders as having free-rein styles. Out of total 100 principals, 42 leaders were 51-60 years of age, 14 (33.33%) were having eclectic leadership style, 20 (47.61%)were having democratic styles, 06 (14.28%) were having autocratic leadership styles, and 02 (04.76%) having free-rein leadership styles.

Table 7: Association between Age and leadership styles of the Principals

Leadership styles	Age of Principals		Total
	Up to 45	Above 45	
Eclectic	9 (9.75)	16 (15.25)	25
Democratic	17 (18.72)	31 (29.28)	48
Autocratic	7 (6.63)	10 (10.37)	17
Free-rein	6 (3.9)	4 (6.1)	10
Total	39	61	100

$\chi^2=2.21$

The calculated value of chi square comes out to be 2.21. This is less than the table value with 3 df i.e. 7.82. This means that there is no significant association between the leadership style of the principals and the age of the principals.

Table 8: Correlation between Leadership Styles Scores and Age and Experience

Leadership Styles	N	Age	Experience
Eclectic Leaders	25	0.0690	0.4620*

Democratic Leaders	48	0.0644	-0.2703
Autocratic Leaders	17	-0.2280	-0.2699
Free-rein Leaders	10	-0.5355	-0.1055

* Significant at 0.05 level.

The data of the table shows the correlation between the Leadership Styles scores and their age and experience. For the Eclectic Styles correlation between principals' leadership styles scores and their age comes out to be 0.0690, which is significant and however the correlation in case of experience comes out to be 0.4620 which is significant at 0.05 level. For Democratic Style the correlation comes out to be 0.0644 for Age which is not significant but -0.2703 for Experience which is once again negative and not significant at 0.05 level. For Autocratic Style the correlation between principals self perceived score and their Age comes out to be -0.2280 which is negative and not significant at 0.05 level, and for their Experience comes out to be -0.2699 which is negative and not significant. And for free-rein style for it comes out to be -0.5355 which is negative and not significant and same is the case with Experience.

DISCUSSION

The present research is focused on identification of leadership styles of principals prevalent in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to find relationship between qualifications, age and experience of schools principals with leadership style scores. This study shows that highest academic credentials e.g. (Up to Graduation's Up to Master's and Above Master's) did not influence leadership style. There is no significant correction between principals' leadership style score and level of education. In a previous study, found that leadership style scores and level of education were not associated. Therefore, finding of the present study support the findings by Hughes (2005), these findings also support the findings by Davis (2002) who reports no association between perceived leadership style and level of education. However, these findings were contradictory to a previous study in which Khan (2011) explored that the heads with higher professional qualifications are more efficient.

This study reflects that there is no significant association between the leadership styles and age of the principals. This result is not in line with the findings of Nsubuga (2009). However Nsubuga's sample was very limited and sample of present study is quite large therefore these findings possess more weightage.

With reference to relationship of leadership styles and experience of the principals, it has been found that there is no association between the leadership style of the principals and their experience. These results are similar to the results of the study by Nakpodia (2009) who have found that there was no significant difference between styles of more experienced and less experienced principals.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of findings following conclusions were drawn:

- Majority of the principals possessed democratic style followed by eclectic, autocratic and free-rein respectively.
- There is no relationship between qualifications of the principals and their leadership styles.

- There is no significant association between the principal's qualifications and his leadership style.
- There is no significant association between the principal's professional experience and his leadership style.
- There is no significant association between the principal's age and leadership style.

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