



A STUDY ON HOW PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES DIFFER BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

The principals' leadership style has a remarkable effect on the effectiveness of schools. The purpose of this study was to examine how principals' leadership styles differ based on the demographic variables in secondary schools in Paddiruppu Zone. The objectives of the study were: To compare the leadership styles of principals in the secondary schools based on demographic variables such as gender, education qualification and years of experience. The study adopted quantitative research method. The target sample population comprised of 34 secondary school principals. Two instruments were used to gather the relevant data. One is Demographic Variable Measurement and second one is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X developed by Bass & Avolio (2004). It was used to classify the leadership styles of principals such as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership style. The data was collected from the relevant principals directly as primary data which was then condensed and summarized before being analyzed using percentages, means, standard deviations and independent sample t-test' and 'one way ANOVA' statistical techniques. For this analysis, SPSS statistical package was used effectively. The results revealed that the principals' leadership style did not expose any significant differences based on the demographic variables like gender, education qualification and experience.

Key words: Leadership styles, transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership, secondary schools, demographic variables

Introduction

Educational institutions like schools are significant places where the next generation is cultivated and these are strongly based on people and human relations in the setting. Leadership style and behaviors of school principals are crucial in the success of the schools. The manner in which a person leads an organization, department, team or individual is referred to as their leadership style (Krallis & Souto, 2014). So the leadership in the educational organization is the basic phenomenon and it is a process of influencing others. Leader communicates a vision which turns self-interest into commitment to a task or a job.



Further leadership leads group of people and provides them the clear ideas and objectives to achieving the organizational goals. Effective and successful leaders inspire and influence others through their self-confidence and motivation. Leadership has always been a subject of huge interest from the beginning when people used to work in groups for the accomplishment of shared goals (Robbins & Sanghi, 2006).

It is a process of social influence in which influence is used by one person over the other to establish several activities in an organization (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010).

And also Wolinski (2010) stated that leadership is a relationship that involves mobilizing, influencing, and guiding others toward desired goals.

The leadership concept started with the origin of trait theories of leadership which concentrated on universal personality traits possessed by the leaders. After that researchers turned their attention on the behaviors of the leaders which focused on the actual behaviors exhibited by the leaders in performing leadership practices (Bateman & Snell, 2002). In recent years, researchers have been theorized leadership from the perspective of new approaches. Among these styles the transformational and transactional leadership are most prominent (Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002). The model of transformational and transactional leadership has its origin in work of James McGregor Burns (1978); it was further developed by Barnard M. Bass (1985) to build a full range leadership model which focuses on complete range of leadership i.e. transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Transformational leaders focus upon beliefs, values, and pay attention to their subordinates' personal needs (Luthans, 2008). In transformational leadership, leaders and subordinates work collectively for the achievement of higher order common goals (Bass & Riggo, 2006) whereas, transactional leadership is mutual nature of leadership, in which leaders offer benefits to the subordinates and in return leaders get benefits from them in a social exchange called a transaction (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Since the origin of transformational and transactional leadership theory many researchers showed great interest in exploring transformational and transactional leadership and explained its impact on organizations' performance and employee related factors. Transformational leadership motivates the subordinates to transcend their interests for the welfare of the organization and it creates extra ordinary effects on subordinates' concerns (Robins & Sanghi, 2009). Transformational leadership inspires subordinates to execute more than what they actually think possible by addressing motivation and inspiring subordinates' needs, values and esteem (Sarros, Gray, & Densten, 2002). On the other hand, the transactional leadership is a type of mutual nature of leadership, in which leaders grant benefits to the subordinates and in return leaders get benefits from them in a social exchange called a transaction (Lunenburg & Ornstein,



2004). Transactional leadership is an exchange between leader and subordinates, and it is based on an agreement in which leader and subordinates contract with each other to work and get rewards. Transactional leaders guide and clearly clarify the subordinates roles and job requirements, and leaders only monitor and ensure that rules and standards are being implemented, and take corrective actions accordingly (Robbins, & Sanghi, 2009).

Since the introduction of transformational and transactional leadership theory many researchers tried to investigate the effects of demographic variable on leaders' perception of their leadership styles. Gender has been given significance in many research studies from last past decades. Researchers have different views about what type of differences exist and to what extent they exist between male and female managers concerning leadership styles.

Numerous research studies have predicted the effects of demographic variables (gender, age, qualification and etc.) on leaders' perception of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. So, the effort has been made in this study to explore the effects of demographic variable on principals' leadership styles in secondary school principal of Paddiruppu Educational Zone as this type of study has not been conducted in this context.

Literature of review

Fareena & Azhar (2018) conducted a study to find out the relationship leadership style of principals and job satisfaction of public college teachers of Punjab. By using multistage random sampling technique 10% out of 439 colleges were taken as sample. There were 2150 teachers (male 950 & female 1200) in 43 colleges. Over all 10 % (male 95 & female 120) teachers were selected as sample. Two questionnaires (MSQ & LSQ) were used to collect data from respondents. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and job satisfaction. However, there is significant relationship between transformational leadership style and job satisfaction. There is no significant difference between male and female principals' leadership style.

Fein, Tziner, and Vasiliu, (2010) conducted a study to investigate the effects of gender and age on perception of leadership styles. The study results revealed the significant differences with regard to gender and age in perception of leadership styles. The results reported significant differences in exhibition of transformational leadership style regarding gender and found that female leaders' score on transformational leadership was better than male leaders. Similarly significant difference was found on transformational style with regard to age while no effect of age was found on transactional style.



Campbell (2010) administered a study on educational leadership by gender and race. Study results indicated significant differences with regard to age and concluded that female preferred transformational style than male principals. This study also investigated years of experience as a mediating variable, and results showed that effects of years of experience on leadership styles is less clear, though there was a minor increase in demonstration of Transformational leadership style with greater experience.

Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin and Marx (2007) explored the relationship of gender, age and educational levels with leadership styles of 56 leaders. Data were collected from 56 leaders and 234 subordinates using Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Results showed that gender produced effects on demonstration of leadership style behaviors. Results also revealed that the interaction of educational levels and gender showed consistent differences in leadership style.

Jones and Rudd (2008) conducted a study to find out the leadership styles of College of Agriculture Academic Program Leaders (Deans). The results specified that academic leaders in colleges of agriculture demonstrated more transformational than transactional leadership style. Results also expressed that gender and ethnicity did not influence the demonstration of leadership style of the academic program leaders.

Objectives of the study

- 1) To compare the leadership styles of principals in the secondary schools-based gender.
- 2) To compare the leadership styles of principals in the secondary schools based on educational qualification.
- 3) To compare the leadership styles of principals in the secondary schools based on years of experience)

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles (Transformational, transactional & laissez-faire leadership style) based on gender of principals in the secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone.

H₀: There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on educational qualification of principals in the secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone.

H₀: There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on years of experience of principals in the secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone.



Methodology

This research is an ex-post facto study, whereby the researcher has no control over the variables studied. The researcher objectively reports what has happened or happening. It is a descriptive research where the researcher measures the variables involved for testing the formulated hypotheses.

Hence in this research design was chosen because the researcher could not directly control the characteristics that served as independent and dependent variable in the study since their manifestations had already occurred and hence the study was carried out in retrospect.

This is also a quantitative method of research in which two or more variables from the same group of subjects and trying to determine if there is difference between the two or more variables. According to this it helps to explain the degree of difference between demographic variables and principals' leadership styles.

Sampling procedure

There were 40 secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone. Among these schools 34 schools were selected using purposive sampling as they were headed by graded principals.

The purposive sampling technique or judgment sampling is a type of non-probability sampling which may be used with both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and it does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. However 34 respondents have been selected for this study. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information.

Description of materials

Two types of research instruments were used in the study:

- a) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass & Avolio. (2004).
- b) Personal information schedule developed by the researcher

Personal information schedule was used to collect demographic data such as gender, age, education qualification, years of experience and etc. multiple leadership Questionnaire was used to assess the leadership styles of the principals in secondary schools.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The collected data were edited to identify and eliminate errors by respondents.



They were then coded to organize and reduce the research data into manageable summaries so that the responses could be grouped into limited categories. Analysis of the coded items using descriptive statistics notably frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviations chi square, were calculated to test the hypothesis. The results were presented in contingency tables and graphs.

Table 1: Showing Mean, SD and t-value of principals' leadership styles (Transformational, transactional & laissez-faire leadership style) on the basis of gender

Leadership styles	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	LS
Transformational leadership	Male	26	55.31	13.79	0.447	NS
	Female	08	54.42	10.779		
Transactional leadership	Male	26	29.54	3.178	0.277	NS
	Female	08	30.00	1.414		
Laissez-faire leadership	Male	26	4.38	3.525	1.078	NS
	Female	08	2.25	3.202		

NS - Not Significant

H₀: There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles (Transformational, transactional & laissez-faire leadership style) based on gender of principals in the secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone.

The Mean, SD and t-value computed for different gender groups for the leadership styles are furnished in Table 1.

The result in the Table 1 shows that there is no significant differences in principals' leadership styles based on their gender. Hence the stated hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2: Showing Mean, SD and F-value of principals' leadership styles on the basis of educational qualification.

Leadership styles	Educational qualification	N	Mean	SD	F-value	LS
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Transformational leadership	G.C.E (A/L)	2	70.00	6.920	1.882	NS
	Degree	22	58.09	18.660		
	Master degree	10	48.80	12.183		
Transactional leadership	G.C.E (A/L)	2	29.00	2.505	0.064	NS
	Degree	22	29.55	4.000		
	Master degree	10	30.00	2.827		
Laissez-faire leadership	G.C.E (A/L)	2	6.00	2.145	1.016	NS
	Degree	22	3.00	5.550		
	Master degree	10	5.40	3.480		

NS - Not Significant

H₀: There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on educational qualification of principals in the secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone.

The Mean, SD and f-value computed for different education qualification for the leadership styles are furnished in Table 2

The result in the Table 2 shows that there is no significant differences in principals' leadership styles based on their educational qualification. Hence the stated hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: Showing Mean, SD and F-value of principals' leadership styles (Transformational, transactional & laissez-faire leadership style) on the basis of years of experience

Leadership styles	Years of experience	N	Mean	SD	F-value	LS
Transformational leadership	<5 years	2	57.00	16.728	0.004	NS
	5-10 years	16	55.88	7.699		
	>10 years	16	56.12	12.183		



Transactional leadership	<5 years	2	32.00	2.949	0.475	NS
	5-10 years	16	29.88	2.900		
	>10 years	16	29.12	2.827		
Laissez-faire leadership	<5 years	2	2.00	4.027	1.220	NS
	5-10 years	16	5.25	2.712		
	>10 years	16	2.75	3.480		

NS - Not Significant

H₀: There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on years of experience of principals in the secondary schools in Paddiruppu Education Zone.

The Mean, SD and F-value computed for their experience for the leadership styles are furnished in Table 3.

The result in the Table 3 shows that there is no significant differences in principals' leadership styles based on their experience. Hence the stated hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

The present research findings revealed that there is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on their gender. This finding is similar to the research findings of Fareena & Azhar (2018) who found that there is no significant difference between male and female principals' leadership style. The finding is contrary to the research findings of Fein, Tziner, and Vasiliu, (2010) whose results revealed the significant differences in exhibition of transformational leadership style regarding gender and found that female leaders' score on transformational leadership was better than male leaders. This finding is in line with the findings of Katie (2013) in a study conducted in Australia which found out that personal characteristics had no association with the leadership style practiced by a principal.

The present research findings revealed that there is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on their year of experience. The result is similar to the research findings of Campbell (2010) investigated years of experience as a mediating variable, and results showed that effects of years of experience on leadership styles is less clear, though there was a minor increase in demonstration of Transformational leadership style with greater experience.



The current research findings showed that there is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on their educational qualification. This research finding is contrary to the findings of Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin and Marx (2007) who explored the relationship of gender, age and educational levels with leadership styles of 56 leaders using Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Results also portrayed that the interaction of educational levels and gender showed consistent differences in leadership style.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the study. There is no significant difference in principals' leadership styles based on their gender. Likewise the other demographic variables such as educational level and number of years served as principal had no significant association with the principals' leadership style. So we can conclude that the demographic variables do not influence on the principals' leadership styles.

Recommendations for Further Research

A study of the same nature should be replicated in other Education zones for purposes of comparison and generalization. In terms of wider application, future studies should be conducted in primary schools and higher educational institutions such as universities and colleges. Presently we are discussing many leadership styles which can be addressed in future studies as per the relevancy of the context.

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