

A Study of Leadership Styles of Administrators and its Perceived Impact on Morale of Elementary School Educators in Pakistan

* Fatima Saddique, MPhil Scholar (Corresponding Author)

** Dr. Bushra Inayat Raja

Abstract



This research investigated the influence of democratic leadership practices of elementary school administrators on the morale of educators. It was also an attempt to explore how democratic leadership style of administrators, develop high morale among elementary school educators in Pakistan. For the purpose, 22 administrators and 20 school educators in federal government educational institutes contributed to the study. Mixed methods research design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data that helped to answer the research questions. The Leadership styles questionnaire developed by Northouse (2009) was used to collect quantitative information regarding democratic, authoritarian, and laissez-faire leadership styles of the administrators. The interview guide developed by Littleford (2007) was used to collect qualitative information of educators' morale. It helped to collect detailed information regarding the research variables. The educator's personal experiences were considered in one-on-one interview, The results indicated that out of 22 schools 16 were practicing democratic leadership style, 1 school was practicing authoritarian leadership style, 4 were practicing both democratic and authoritarian leadership style and 1 school administrator was practicing laissez-faire leadership style. Themes induced from the qualitative data, using thematic analysis approach of the educators' interview indicated that administrators' leadership styles influenced moral of the educators. These findings showed that elementary educators' morale was high due to democratic leadership style of the school administrators.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, School administrators, Educators, Morale, Elementary Schools.

Introduction

School leadership is a crucial component of school administration because it influences the achievement of school goals (Gyang, 2018). School administrators are expected to do multiple tasks at school on daily basis (Sheninger, 2011). Apart from regular management responsibilities for example continuous supervision, dealing with parental and educator issues and dealing with disciplinary problems. The school administrators understand that their leadership practices improve the institution's environment (Whitaker, 2012). Further, Mason found that school leadership also develops the morale of instructors, management, and employees of an institution (2007). Without teachers, the school's work cannot be completed. Establishing their support requirements will help to ensure job satisfaction and raise morale (Barksdale, 2022).

High morale benefits the instructors, management, and learners (Mooney, n.d.); so, management should be well-informed about leadership practices and attitudes as they are contributing very effectively in increasing and retaining high morale within their institutions. Bentley and Rempel (1980) confirmed that school leadership and other factors affect the instructor's morale. Further, Morale is also influenced by educator's attitude towards the profession, attitude towards colleagues, pay, work division, syllabus, grade, societal help, institutional support, and societal demands (Bentley & Rempel, 1980).

The educators develop high morale when school administrators are trustworthy and dedicated (Meador, 2016), like-minded (Pressley, 2012), and good at communicating with staff members (Fullan, 2011) Moreover, morale further raised up when school heads acknowledge and appreciate the hard work of their staff members (Hodges, 2005). Similarly, staff morale boosts when there is professional development programs for the educators (Fiore, 2009), and they can exchange ideas with

* Department of Education, Virtual University, Lahore Pakistan. Email: fatimasaddique@gmail.com

** PhD in Leadership and Management from UCL Institute of Education. University of London, UK.
Email: bushra_edu@hotmail.com

other professionals (Meador, 2016). Administrators' qualities like being supportive (Hodges, 2005), courteous (Wilson, 2012), and efficient at solving institutional problems (Whitaker, 2012), is associated with the high morale of the educators. Low teacher morale is a result of stress as well as inadequate salary, pressure from testing requirements, disrespect, and lack of support (Greene, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The study explores the perceptions of elementary school educators about their morale that are due to the democratic leadership style of their school administrators, by using the mixed methods approach to the research.

Significance of Research

It is hoped that the outcome of the study will help the school administrator and teachers to develop a conducive teaching learning environment to provide better results in terms of student's performance. It will help the school administrator to understand if the democratic leadership style will be taken into account the teacher's morale will be high. They can work in the environment of satisfaction and it will lead to the student's achievement. It will also help to find out how democratic leadership style is effective to be exercised in school. It will help to recognize the importance of this variable that has an influence on teacher's morale at school.

Research Objectives

The research objectives were as follows:

1. To explore the influence of democratic leadership styles of administrators on the morale of elementary school educators in Pakistan.
2. To explore how democratic leadership styles of administrators, develop high morale among elementary school educators in Pakistan.

Research Questions

The study was directed by the following research questions:

1. What are the elementary school educators' perceptions about the morale while teaching?
2. How democratic leadership style of elementary school administrators has a positive influence on the morale of elementary school educators?
3. How the democratic leadership style of elementary school administrators have a negative influence on the morale of the educators?
4. In what way democratic leadership styles of administrators influence the morale of the educators?

Review of Related Literature

Huysman (2008) stated that educator's morale is linked with encouragement, handwork, and work commitment. However, the school administrator and directors of education are responsible for educators' morale but educational leaders should also consider other factors that influence educator morale (Willis & Varner, 2010). Kessler & Snodgrass (2014) stated that the ability to communicate efficiently leads to the high morale of employee "A successful administrator effectively communicates the school goals to the instructors and children" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

A leader can boost productivity and morale by taking into account what motivates each employee. A leader must figure out from the employees what aspects of the job they find most challenging and difficult. Don't make assumptions about a staff member's preferences based on a single conversation. Behave as though you are truly interested in what the staff member is saying by being a good listener (Tingum, 2019)

Studies conducted by (Huysman, 2008; Mackenzie, 2007; Reed, 2010) found that non-recognition is another aspect that influences the educator's morale. When educators realize that their hard work has no worth, they become demoralized. Good leaders know the importance of appreciation. They truly appreciate their employees, to increase their morale. "Day-to-day activities of the school heads exhibit an important role in employees' morale" (Whitaker et al., 2009, p. 105). The educators may leave the school where the administrator does not regard or trust their abilities (Wilson, 2012,).

According to Willis & Varner (2010) the attitude of the administration and an atmosphere they create for educators, affects the educator's morale. Different practices that affect educators' morale are: admiration, academic and professional help, and training. Building relationships inside the school, assisting teachers, showing trust, and having effective communication skills all depend on

administrative leadership. These actions, along with others, encourage strong teacher morale (Gadson,2018).

According to Friedman and Reynolds (2011) the great administrators know that the professional development of educators are important and they allow them to attend training workshops. "Training courses in which administrators are active and educators are passive for a half or entire day are famously ineffective" (p. 126). Similarly, Fiore (2009) revealed, that "all together for staff advancement the program must be planned with consideration of the necessities and needs of the educators" (p. 77).

Fullan (2007) revealed that trust is a basic connection between a leader and its followers. Trust is crucial to employee's work commitment. At the point when educators trust their school heads, morale is improved. Further, in any event on the off chance that one has been misled, misdirected, or let down repeatedly, the resulting doubt is negative to morale. It is the responsibility of school leaders to consider the educators morale. They should have knowledge about the indicators of low morale to stop the institutional decline. Among the different factors influencing educators' morale, a few researchers have recognized that the school leadership is the most significant factor. According to Fiore (2009), autocratic school administrators decide which activities should be allowed. Autocratic school administrators don't look for consultation with their representatives, low morale is mostly associated with the authority style.

"Autocratic school administrators remain at distance with their staff and do not involve the workers in decision making process. At the point when the staff feels distanced, educators experience low morale" (Root, 2016, para. 4). Laissez-faire school administrators consider educators' abilities. Moreover, laissez-faire administrative style is associated with high educators' morale. They allow educators to make their own decisions (Robinson, n.d.). Gill (2014b) stated that democratic school administrators distribute tasks among educators. Further, they accept their point of view and encourage and value them while making a decision. "Administrators who involve educators in school affairs increases their morale and improves school result" (Root, 2016, para. 4).

Thus, taking an overview of the literature, it was concluded that the morale of educator depends upon the administrator's leadership styles. Therefore, an attempt has been made to explore the relationship of educators' morale with administrators' democratic leadership style at elementary school level.

Conceptual framework

Mixed methods research has been used by researchers for many decades. It has been referred by different names (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007. Mix-method research is employed by the researchers to expand the scope of research. Further, it has been an attempt to lessen the weaknesses of one approach alone (Blake 1989; Greene et al., 1989; Rossman & Wilson 1991). In order to explore the same phenomenon in one study or succession of studies both quantitative and qualitative method is used for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). This research is conducted in a natural setting the researcher has interacted with the educators to know about their perceptions of their personal morale while teaching and how the leadership style of elementary school administrators has a positive or negative influence on the morale of elementary school educators.

Research Methodology

Research design

To study the Leadership styles of school administrators and its perceived impact on the morale of Elementary school Educators in Pakistan, a mixed methods approach was adopted in this research.

Population and Sample

A sample of 22 female administrators was taken from 32 elementary schools of Federal Government Elementary Institutions Cantt Garrison Rawalpindi city of Pakistan. A list of all elementary schools was taken from the office of the federal directorate of education (FDE) Rawalpindi. By exercising convenient sampling approach, 20 educators were chosen to be the potential participants for the interviews. Keeping in view the ethics of research the all participants were given pseudonyms to hide their identity.

Data Collection Tools

To get the quantitative data, the Leadership styles Questionnaire, 5x rater form, developed by Northouse in 2009, was selected to find out the administrators' leadership styles. It was a close ended questionnaire. The researchers contacted the instrument developer Northouse 2009 that confirmed, no

reliability estimates available for leadership styles questionnaire. It also confirmed that questionnaire has content validity, the questions are closely related with the leadership styles, it was designed to measure.

To get the qualitative data, the Interviews were conducted with the participants by using an interview guide developed by Littleford in 2007. The said interview guide was developed after intense review of literature about school administrators' leadership style as well as research on high and low morale of the teachers. Furthermore, the interview guide developer is a knowledgeable person, she has teaching experience of more than 30 years and has observed the highs and lows of faculty morale.

Data Analysis

Section I

Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presented the findings of the quantitative data. The leadership styles questionnaire was included 18 items of which 6 were related to the democratic leadership styles and 6 were related to authoritarian leadership styles and the other 6 were related to laissez-faire leadership styles.

Table 1

Leadership styles of Administrators

School No	Scores in Authoritarian Leadership Styles of Administrators	Scores in Democratic Leadership styles of Administrators	Scores in Laissez-faire Leadership styles of Administrators	Leadership styles of Administrators
1	19	23	20	Democratic
2	21	25	22	Democratic
3	18	27	20	Democratic
4	20	28	21	Democratic
5	23	22	25	Laissez-faire
6	16	23	19	Democratic
7	19	23	19	Democratic
8	18	24	14	Democratic
9	15	24	18	Democratic
10	25	22	18	Authoritarian
11	16	23	21	Democratic
12	22	24	13	Democratic
13	21	28	14	Democratic
14	18	24	20	Democratic
15	13	21	11	Democratic
16	25	28	25	Democratic
17	23	15	14	Authoritarian
18	22	30	16	Democratic
19	27	12	9	Authoritarian
20	19	19	14	Democratic/Authoritarian
21	23	15	16	Authoritarian
22	21	26	18	Democratic

The results have shown that sixteen schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 6,7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 22, administrators have a democratic leadership style and the school administrators of school 20 have both authoritarian and democratic leadership style. Therefore, the administrators of schools 10, 17, 19 and 21 have authoritarian leadership styles and the administrator of school 5 has a laissez-faire leadership style. The results have concluded that the democratic leadership style has been practiced by the majority of school administrators.

Section II

Qualitative Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presented the findings of the qualitative data analysis to see the effects of administrators' leadership styles on the morale of their educators working in the elementary schools of Rawalpindi city. These findings have been carried out by using step by step thematic analysis approach. The interview data were recorded and then transcribed by using open coding, axial coding and selective coding techniques. The following eight themes have been developed from the interview data to verify

the democratic leadership style of the administrators and its effect on the morale of the educators. For example:

- i. Building Trust
- ii. Enhance Motivation
- iii. Good listener motivates others
- iv. Delegation of tasks makes other confident
- v. Collaborative decision making makes environment a trustworthy
- vi. Supportive environment facilitates teaching learning environment
- vii. Good Communication boosts up collaborative environment
- viii. Acknowledgement and Appreciation encourages other

Following quotes from the transcribed interviews data reflect that how these themes were induced as per the perception of the participants. Moreover, it has also been highlighted that how directly or indirectly these themes influence morale of the educators.

Building Trust

The research found that the morale of school educators' was high because they experienced an atmosphere of trust at the workplace. It was found that they have high confidence and morale due to their administrators' attitude. The study participants described that they have a strong and trustworthy relationship with the school administrator'. They also revealed that their administrator was very helpful in problem-solving. For example, one of the participants elaborated:

"I was newly appointed. There was no classification among educators by administrator. She treats all equally and trust and believes in the abilities of others. She assigns me very responsible tasks and gives full freedom to complete the task till the end. She never intervenes. However, when I feel difficulty, she gives her support maximum possible. The school administrators' support and trust motivated me to continue my profession as an educator in this school". (Hira)

The research findings suggested that developing trust among the employees is a fundamental quality that administrators should possess. It certainly leaves good impact on the followers and enhances their performance and integrity with the organizations.

Enhance Motivation

The study indicated that school administrators encouraged and appreciated the school educators and helped them to handle daily challenges at school. The school educators were motivated to work and teach better due to the appreciation and acknowledgement of their good performance and cooperation received from their administrator.

A school educator explained her feelings about her motivation while teaching. She elaborated:

"The continuous good feedback provided by the administrator motivates us to improve our performance further. She added that in weekly meetings the administrator gives good remarks about my performance and appreciates a lot in front of others. This encourages me to work harder for the betterment of school". (Irum)

The study, findings suggested that an administrator that shows interest in good work of educators and duly acknowledges their good performance. This kind of behavior increases their motivation level which subsequently results in the effectiveness of teaching learning process.

Good Listener Motivates Others

The participants believed that administrators' being good listeners affect educators' morale positively. They also elaborated that the quality of their administrator being a good listener helped them to solve their daily problems before they get multiplied. A participant shared her point of view in these words:

"Our administrator feels no bothersome to listen our concerns. We all have frequent and effective communication with our administrator. No communication gap exists. She listens our concerns attentively. We feel satisfied with her good response to our matters. The participant further added that she never minds whenever we visit her office" such behavior of administrator made us feel confident and relaxed". (Amber)

The administrators being good listeners like to interact with their educators. They impose no restriction and allow them to visit their offices, listen to their problems and help them accordingly.

When the school administrators behave like a good listener the employees feel they are honestly concerned about their problems (Tingum, 2017).

Delegation of the Tasks Makes Others Confident

The study participants defined that academic and non-academic tasks have been divided among the school educators. They all were equally allocated the responsibilities and their titles. That made the educators more responsible and confident. They were putting more effort to complete the task with complete success. One of the participants reported:

"I was newly recruited in that school. I have no work experience. Despite of that my administrator assigned some duties. My colleagues were not agreed with that decision. But administrator trusted on my abilities. Thus, I performed my duties diligently and successfully. I organized a debate competition among the students. It was good experience which boosted up my confidence. This all become possible because my administrator had given me a chance to show my talent". (Farhana)

The research indicated that the delegation of power and distribution of task among the employees helped them to show their abilities and improved their skills. Which boosted up their moral and made their personalities stronger.

Collaborative Decision-Making Makes Environment Trustworthy

It appeared that the administrators introduced the collaborative decision-making environment. That is one of the main abilities of a democratic leadership. One of the participants described:

"During the academic meetings the administrator welcomed the suggestions forwarded by the educators. Whenever I presented my opinion to any of the matters under discussion, she gave full considerations. Due to this collaborative environment nobody hesitated to express their point of view". (Zarnab)

The research findings have revealed that the educators were happy, motivated confident and expressive due to this freedom of expression provided by their administrators. Which certainly boosted up their morale.

Supportive Environment

Supportive environment facilitates teaching learning environment to enhance the morale of the employees, the supportive environment is essential to be provided by the employer. The participants told that such environment was also there. For instance, one of the educators said:

"The school administrator behaved very gently and politely with all of us. She was very caring about our personal as well as professional problems. Once, I faced a pay-related issue, and another has an allowance-related worries. Clerical staff was not cooperative. We both requested the administrator for her attention to these matters. She very gently handled them and we got relief. (Rabia)

The findings indicated that due to supportive environment provided by the school administrators educators were satisfied and worked for the betterment of school without any worries. Which resulted in effective and productive teaching learning process.

Communication Boosts up Collaborative Environment

Open communication with all stake holders brings improvements and they all stay informed with every important information. Giving and receiving feedback is the best policy for the improvement of the plans of action wherever is required. The school administrators exercise this practice and take all educators and parents of the students on board and used to discuss students' progress with them. One of the participants expressed her opinion. She summarized:

"There is frequent communication among all of us. We have a weekly meeting with our administrator and after every month with the parents of the students. She also visits classes and talks with the students about their studies and the facilities provided by the school. Further, she also asks questions relating to the course to check their learning. Moreover, she makes sure that all important information is circulated among the educators timely, to keep them updated. Thus, no worries exist among us. We remained relaxed"

It is evident that there was no communication gap in the school at each level. That was not only helpful for the educators to work in better environment but for the administrators as well. It helps them to find out the interest and abilities of the educators. The administrator's interest and interaction with educators increases the educator's morale and confidence. The research also explored that the frequent and supportive communication by educators with administrators minimized their problems and increased their work satisfaction.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation Encourages Others

The rewards in any form boost motivation and encourage to work more hard. The interviewees' expressed a feeling of pleasure when the administrators acknowledged their efforts. One of the participants said:

“When my administrator acknowledges my efforts. I feel a sense of belongingness when she appreciated my extraordinary work. I become more motivated I want to work further hard for the betterment of my school. (Amna)

Further to this, one of the educators shared an example:

“Once there was a student who was unable to do her homework because her parents were illiterate. I started helping her in the break time so that she can improve her scores in examinations. I continued this practice till the examinations. It really helped the student to improve her deficiencies. When administrator came to know about this. She came to my class and in front of whole class appreciated me a lot. In a function she arranged a certificate of appreciation for me. I felt so good. This boosted my energy to work further.” (Sehar)

The current study has found that acknowledgement and appreciation of educators, developed more motivation and eagerness among them to work further hard. This certainly contributed towards school's betterment.

Conclusion

The present study explored the leadership styles of school administrators and its impact on the morale of elementary school educators. The findings suggested that the school administrators were using democratic leadership styles in their school that positively influenced the morale of the educators. It tends to be inferred that elementary educators' morale was high because of the specific qualities of administrators like their effective communication with all stake holders' trust in educators' abilities, the delegation of tasks to all, and their full involvement in the decision-making process of the school matters. This research has additionally found that educators were enthusiastic, motivated and commitment towards their job and work performance, due to the full support and cooperation rendered by their administrators. The acknowledgment and appreciation of their hard work also made the educators confident and self-assured. The provision of teaching and learning materials in time, made the work environment more effective, smooth and conducive. It is concluded that the democratic leadership style of head teachers is very effective for the better performance of the educators because such qualities are the basic source to uplift their morale. The high morale of the educators finally makes the teaching learning process more effective and fruitful.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings it is suggested that the training workshops about the leadership style should be conducted for school administrators to give them awareness about the leadership styles and their impact on the performance of teachers and students. It is also suggested that the further research should be conducted with the big sample which would help in the better generalization of the research findings. A similar comparative study in private and public sector schools of Pakistan can be conducted to see the difference in results.

References

- Barksdale, T. L. (2022). *A Sense of Belonging: An Examination of the Impact of Leadership Behaviors on Teacher Morale in Rural Middle Schools* (Doctoral dissertation, Gardner-Webb University).
- Bentley, R., & Rempel, A. (1980). *The Purdue teacher opinionnaire*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Research Foundation.
- Fiore, D. (2009). *Introduction to educational administration: Standards, theories, and practice* (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Friedman, A., & Reynolds, L. (2011). *Burned in: Fueling the fire to teach*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Wiley.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gadson, C. E. (2018). Perceptions of Principal Leadership on Teacher Morale. Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/5042>

- Gill, E. (2016). What is democratic/participative leadership? How collaboration can boost morale. *St. Thomas University Online*.
- Greene, P. (2019). "Tired of being treated like dirt" teacher morale in the 2019 PDK poll. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petergreene/2019/08/07/tired-of-beingtreated-like-dirt-teacher-morale-in-the-2019-pdk-po>
- Gyang, T. (2018). Leadership and teachers' morale in senior secondary schools in Plateau State, Nigeria. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 59-67.
- Hodges, D. (2005). *Looking forward to Monday morning: Ideas for recognition and appreciation activities and fun things to do at work for educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Huysman, J. T. (2007). *Rural teacher satisfaction: An analysis of beliefs and attitudes of rural teachers' job satisfaction*. University of Central Florida.
- Kessler, S., & Snodgrass, A. (2014). The house that affirmation builds. *Educational Leadership*, 71(5), 60-63.
- Littleford, A. R. (2007). *Principal leadership and its perceived influence on teacher morale in elementary schools* (Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University).
- Mackenzie, N. (2007). Teacher morale: More complex than we think? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 34(1), 89-104. Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/aer/online/0701g.pdf>
- Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Mason, C. (2007). *An assistant principal's guide-- into the fire: How to prepare for and survive the position*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Meador, D. (2016). *Ten ways principals can provide ongoing, collaborative teacher support*. Retrieved from <http://teaching.about.com/od/SchoolPrincipals/a/Provide-Teacher-Support.html>
- Mooney, L. (n.d.). *Effects of top leadership on morale*. Retrieved from <http://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/effects-top-leadership-morale-7732.html>
- Northouse, P. G. (2009). Introduction to *Leadership: Concept and practice*. Sage Publications.
- Pressley, D. (2012). The importance of empathy in the workplace. *Smart Business Magazine*.
- Robinson, M. (n.d.). *Manager's leadership style influenced by personality, activity*. Retrieved from <http://www.humankinetics.com/excerpts/excerpts/managersleadership-style-influenced-by-personality-activity>
- Root, G. (2016). *How does leadership style influence organizational productivity?* Retrieved from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/leadership-styleinfluenceorganizational-productivity-11643.html>
- Sheninger, E. (2011). An open letter to principals: Five leadership strategies for the new year. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/principals-leadership-eric-sheninger>
- Tingum, J. (2019). *Why is listening important in a business organization?* chron. Retrieved from [Why Is Listening Important in a Business Organisation? \(chron.com\)](http://www.chron.com)
- Whitaker, T. (2012). *What great principals do differently* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Eye on Education.
- Whitaker, T., Whitaker, B., & Lumpa, D. (2009). *Motivating and inspiring teachers: The educational leaders' guide for building staff morale* (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Willis, M., & Varner, L. (2010). Factors that affect teacher morale. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 8(4), 24. Retrieved from <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol8/iss4/24>
- Wilson, J. (2012). *Principals own the morale of teachers*. Edweek. Retrieved from [Principals Own the Morale of Teachers \(Opinion\) \(edweek.org\)](http://www.edweek.org)