Review Article

The Impact of Principal Leadership Styles on Teachers' Job Performance in Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study investigates the impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job performance in primary schools, focusing on how different leadership approaches: democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transformational, instructional, and moral affect teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative methodology, systematically reviewing literature from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and educational reports. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and the effects of various leadership styles on teacher performance.

Findings: The analysis reveals that transformational, democratic, and instructional leadership styles have the most positive impact on teacher performance, fostering a supportive environment that enhances motivation, professional growth, and student outcomes.

Conclusion: The study concluded that leadership styles, especially transformational and democratic, play a pivotal role in shaping teacher performance, highlighting the need for school administrators to develop flexible leadership strategies that cater to the specific needs of their schools.

Keywords: Principal Leadership Styles, Teachers' Job Performance, Primary Schools, Impact.

Background of the Study

In an era of rapid and continuous change, education systems worldwide are facing unprecedented challenges, necessitating reforms and adaptations to meet the evolving demands. Schools, as fundamental institutions responsible for shaping future generations, are at the heart of these transformative efforts. Therefore, education systems in many countries are undergoing school reforms to better equip young individuals with the skills necessary for thriving in the twenty-first century (Kadbey, 2018; Hallinger, & Heck, 2010). The effectiveness of these reforms is closely tied to the people who constitute schools—teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Thus, any discussion on excellence and school improvement must focus on human resources, as people are the driving force behind organizational change and the realization of educational goals Fullan, (2002), Blaik et al., (2016). Empowering and motivating the capacities of these individuals is a pivotal factor in transforming educational institutions. Furthermore, school improvement and the enhancement of educational changes do not occur in isolation.

They require deliberate efforts to build and develop human capacities, which serve as catalysts for achieving school reforms. This focus on human resources directly contributes to improved teaching practices, more effective learning processes, and ultimately, enhanced academic achievements for students Blaik et al., (2016), Dantley, (2005) and Hargreaves, & Fullan, (2012). By emphasizing the role of individuals within schools and fostering their development, education systems can drive meaningful and sustainable changes that align with the increasing demands of the modern world. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) and Hallinger and Heck (2010) highlighted the significant relationship between effective teachers and successful school leaders, emphasizing how strong leadership fosters school improvement and enhances student outcomes. In terms of definition, Okumbe (1998) defines leadership as method neither of cheering and serving others to do something of their own preference, because it is essential nor because of the alarm of result of disobedience. Leadership is thus a procedure of hopeful and helping others to work actively towards objectives. Their findings are especially relevant in the context of primary schools, where the foundational education students receive plays a crucial role in shaping their academic future. Effective leadership in primary schools creates a learning environment that promotes collaboration among teachers, encourages professional development, and focuses on the implementation of strategies that directly impact student achievement. According to Leithwood and Jantzi, transformational leadership practices, such as setting a clear vision, providing support, and fostering teacher growth, contributes to school improvement and positively influence both teachers' performance and students' learning outcomes. Hallinger and Heck (2010) also underscored that successful school leaders create a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that the curriculum, teaching methods, and student assessments are aligned with school goals. In primary schools, where teachers are tasked with building students' core academic skills, effective leadership is critical in guiding teachers toward practices that result in higher student achievement.

One of the primary goals of school reform, as noted by Huitt et al. (2009), is to enhance student achievement. In primary schools, this goal is often closely tied to the ability of teachers to deliver quality instruction that meets the diverse needs of young learners. Researcher teachers bear the primary responsibility for student success, suggesting that the quality of instruction is directly related to student outcomes, Darling-Hammond (2000). This perspective is particularly relevant in the early years of schooling when students are developing fundamental literacy and numeracy skills. Sanders and Rivers (1996) provided further evidence supporting the importance of effective teaching, showing that placing students in the care of highly effective teachers over consecutive years has a compounding effect on their academic performance. In primary schools, where students spend multiple years with the same or similar teaching staff, ensuring a consistent quality of teaching is vital for sustained student progress. Research demonstrates that leadership plays a key role in facilitating the professional growth of teachers, which in turn influences their effectiveness in the classroom. Principals in primary schools are, therefore, not only administrators but also instructional leaders who play an integral role in shaping the learning environment and supporting teachers to drive student achievement. Academic literature strongly supports the idea that in primary schools, the synergy between effective leadership and quality teaching leads to meaningful school improvement and enhanced student outcomes. School reforms that aim to improve student achievement must focus on empowering both teachers and leaders, fostering a collaborative and growth-oriented school culture. According to leadership in school system, according to Sergiovanni (2015), refers to leadership in the school system in terms of forces, each of which allows the principal to optimize and promote the school. There are five types of leadership forces and they are presented in a hierarchical structure: technical force, human power, educational power, symbolic power and cultural power (Vecchio et al., 2010). Likewise, leadership is the ability of a person or group to influence people, to lead them to a common goal, and to motivate them to perform tasks. Studies show that there are many theories that explore the various aspects of leadership (Oplatka, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2015). In fact, the school principal is the dominant figure in the school, has a "critical role" and is the most influential person in the school. There is no doubt that the success of schools is largely attributed to the principal (Fidler, 1997).

Therefore, this study reviews the Impact of Principal Leadership Styles on Teacher Job Performance in Primary Schools.

Problem Statement

In primary schools, teacher performance is a key determinant of student success and overall school improvement. Ideally, school principals should provide leadership that enhances teacher job performance, fostering a collaborative and productive environment that positively impacts student learning outcomes. Numerous studies of organization and management in respect to leadership have constantly showed that leadership style is an important factor in organizational performance and usefulness; definitely or negatively organizational process and constitution, patterns of social interaction, members' belief, attitude and job behavior (Shum and Cheng, 1997). Effective leadership styles, such as transformationassl or instructional leadership, are critical in motivating teachers, improving job satisfaction, and promoting professional growth. However, in many primary schools, there is disconnect between the leadership styles of principals and the actual job performance of teachers. The gap lies in the inconsistent application of leadership strategies that support teachers in their roles, resulting in varying levels of teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness. This inconsistency can lead to suboptimal student performance and hinder the overall success of the school. The problem is compounded by a lack of understanding of how different leadership styles directly influence teacher performance in the context of primary education. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the specific impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job performance in primary schools, identifying the leadership practices that contribute most effectively to improved teacher outcomes.

General Objective

To investigate the impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job performance in primary schools, focusing on how different leadership approaches influence teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness.

Specific Objectives

1. To differentiate Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance
2. To assess different types of Leadership styles.

Research Questions

1. How do principal leadership styles affect teacher job performance in primary schools?
2. What are the different types of Leadership styles?

Significance of the Study

This study will provide valuable insights into the leadership practices that are most effective in improving teacher job performance and, consequently, student outcomes in primary schools. The findings will help school administrators and policymakers design leadership training programs and interventions aimed at fostering better teacher performance and school improvement. Additionally, the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on school leadership in developing countries, offering practical recommendations for educational reform.

Methodology

The methodology for this review paper followed a qualitative approach, focusing on the synthesis of existing literature on the impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job performance. The researcher systematically collected and analyzed empirical studies. This review primarily drew on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reputable educational reports to examine the relationship between leadership styles and teacher performance. The selection criteria for the literature included relevance to leadership in educational contexts, particularly in primary schools, and the influence of leadership styles on teacher

motivation, satisfaction, and effectiveness. Studies that explored autocratic, democratic, transformational, instructional, and laissez-faire leadership styles were prioritized, ensuring a comprehensive examination of their impact. Sources from both developed and developing countries were included to provide a global perspective on the subject matter. The review utilized thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in the literature, categorizing the effects of different leadership styles on teacher job performance. This approach allowed the researcher to critically evaluate.

Literature review

Principal Leadership Styles and Teacher Job Performance

The effective performance, work motivation, and contentment level of employees are critical factors for all institutions, especially in educational organizations, where these elements significantly influence teaching quality and student outcomes Chen et al., (2017), Demircioglu, (2021). In the context of primary school teachers, these factors are not only vital for the well-being and efficiency of the educators but also directly impact students' academic achievements and personal development. Previous research has established that the ability to maintain a job and thrive in a teaching position is not solely dependent on performance or financial necessity. Leadership practices and the supportive environment created by school principals play an integral role (Sun and Wang, 2017; Lee et al., 2019) This suggests that beyond individual competence, a teacher's long-term success in a school is also influenced by how well they are guided, motivated, and supported by the leadership, particularly by school principals. Effective leadership in primary schools encompasses both academic and administrative support. School principals act as facilitators and problem solvers, setting clear directions and offering practical instructions to help teachers achieve their goals (Saleem et al., 2024). Leadership, in this sense, involves much more than simply managing school operations. It includes the creation of action plans, determining how and when these plans should be implemented, motivating staff members, and setting challenging yet achievable goals. Furthermore, effective leaders foster positive relationships with their staff, maintain open lines of communication, and create an environment where teachers feel valued and supported.

In practice, when school principals provide such guidance, primary school teachers are more likely to feel motivated and content with their jobs. This supportive environment contributes to higher levels of job satisfaction, increased motivation, and improved performance. As a result, teachers are more committed to their roles, more likely to innovate in their teaching methods, and more effective in fostering student engagement and success. For instance, Imhangbe et al., (2018), examined the influence of principal leadership styles on teacher job performance in public senior secondary schools in Edo, Nigeria. They conducted a survey of principals and teachers and found a relatively significant influence of democratic leadership style on teacher job performance. Similarly, Atsebeha, (2016), found a relatively significant influence of supportive leadership on job performance in primary schools in Tigray, Ethiopia. Several other investigations were conducted on this striking phenomenon Wachira, at al, 2017, Machumu, et al, (2014). Additionally, school leadership that emphasizes professional development, recognition of teachers' efforts, and the creation of a collaborative environment enhances teacher retention. This is especially important in primary education, where teachers often face unique challenges such as managing young children, developing foundational skills, and addressing diverse learning needs. Therefore, a leadership approach that prioritizes clear communication, support, and professional growth not only improves the performance of teachers but also ensures a positive and stable learning environment for students.

Types of Leadership

In the context of primary school teachers, leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment and guiding the academic and personal development of young students. According to Brock & Grady (2000), leadership can be likened to a "flame" that consists of three essential components: the leader (the spark), the subordinates (combustion materials), and the circumstances (oxygen). The teacher, as the leader, initiates the spark of guidance and direction in the classroom. The students, representing the

combustion materials, are influenced and energized by the leader's actions and decisions. The circumstances, such as the educational policies, resources, and classroom environment, act as oxygen, either fueling or restricting the effectiveness of this leadership. Effective leadership by primary school teachers involves igniting enthusiasm, fostering a collaborative learning environment, and adapting to diverse circumstances to ensure that the "flame" of learning remains bright and impactful for all students.

Through previous empirical research, three basic leadership styles mostly adopted by principals in developing countries are as follows: (i) autocratic leadership style; (ii) democratic or participative leadership style; and (iii) laissez-faire or free-rein leadership style (Oplatka, 2004; Okoji, 2016; Saleem et al., 2020). These styles offer unique approaches to decision-making, delegation, and stakeholder involvement. Mumford (2006) argued that most leaders preferably deploy participative and directive styles and endorses the encouragement of democratic leadership style as an alternative to laissez-fair and autocratic leadership styles. He contended that democratic leadership not only fosters a collaborative environment but also enhances teacher motivation and performance. The literature review highlights the use or blend of various leadership styles in certain situations, i.e., democratic, autocratic, task-oriented, collegial, or transformational, that enable school leadership to instigate school improvement and reform (Heck and Hallinger, 2010; Kiboss and Jemiryott, 2014; Sebastian, J., and Allensworth, E. (2019), Hosseingholizadeh et al., 2021). Flexibility in leadership is critical, as effective leaders often shift between styles depending on the needs of their staff, students, and the educational environment.

Additionally, a conceptual model of school leadership was recently developed typically reliant on three leadership styles, namely, instructional, transformational, and moral, to improve school effectiveness and teacher job performance (Phuc et al., 2020). Instructional leadership focuses on promoting teaching and learning excellence, transformational leadership aims at inspiring and motivating change, and moral leadership emphasizes ethical decision-making and fostering a positive school culture. These leadership styles are seen as crucial in enhancing both the academic and social outcomes of schools, especially in contexts of reform or rapid educational change. Moreover, leadership, although being administrators or pedagogical leaders, demands the integration and proficient use of numerous approaches, such as behavioral approach, trait approach, and skills approach, and appropriate leadership styles across different situations or occasions (Schleicher, 2015; Northouse, 2018; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2021). Leaders must assess the specific circumstances of their schools and apply tailored strategies that best suit their team's dynamics and challenges.

Thus, successful school leaders are those who adopt an appropriate leadership style or a mixture of various styles to lead teachers toward the attainment of school goals (Schleicher, 2015; Stevenson et al., 2016). These leaders demonstrate agility, emotional intelligence, and a clear vision for school progress, facilitating not only academic achievement but also fostering a supportive and collaborative school culture.

Analysis

The general objective of the study in the review article is to investigate the impact of principal leadership styles on teacher job performance in primary schools. This investigation is rooted in the understanding that school leadership significantly influences teacher motivation, satisfaction, and ultimately their job performance, which in turn affects student outcomes. The specific objectives outlined in the study focus on examining various leadership styles: democratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, transformational, instructional, and moral leadership and how these approaches shape teacher performance in the educational context.

Leadership in education, such as that by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), aligns with the study's objectives by highlighting how transformational leadership, characterized by setting a clear vision and fostering teacher growth, has a positive impact on both teachers and students. This perspective is echoed by Hallinger and Heck (2010), who emphasize that effective school leaders create environments conducive to continuous improvement, which directly affects teaching quality and student achievement. The

comparison between these scholars and the study highlighted a consensus on the importance of strong leadership in enhancing teacher performance and overall school outcomes. However, where the study distinguishes itself is in its focus on the primary education sector, where the role of the principal is even more critical due to the foundational nature of the education being provided. The study builds on the work of Blaik et al., (2016), who stress the need for deliberate efforts in developing human capacities within schools to drive school improvement. The review paper asserted that empowering teachers through supportive leadership is essential for fostering an environment where they can innovate and improve their instructional methods, which in turn benefits student achievement. This is particularly relevant in primary schools, where teachers are responsible for developing students' core academic skills, as highlighted by Sanders and Rivers (1996).

The investigation also contrasted different leadership styles, drawing on various scholars who have examined the impact of leadership on job performance. For instance, the study mirrors the findings of Mumford (2006), who advocated for the democratic leadership style as more effective in enhancing teacher motivation compared to laissez-faire or autocratic approaches. This insight aligns with the objectives of the study, which seek to explore how leadership styles like democratic or transformational leadership can improve teacher motivation and effectiveness in primary schools.

Moreover, the study's objective to assess transformational leadership's impact aligns with the broader literature. Transformational leadership is seen as particularly effective in motivating teachers and fostering a sense of professional growth, as noted by Fullan (2002). The document further supports this with evidence from Atsebeha, A.T, (2016) who found that supportive leadership significantly influences teacher performance in primary schools, much like the study's focus on identifying which leadership practices are most beneficial in fostering teacher satisfaction and motivation Atsebeha, A.T, (2016). Therefore, the objectives of the study are deeply intertwined with existing literature on educational leadership. The scholars' viewpoints, such as those from Leithwood, Heck, and Mumford, align with the document's findings, emphasizing that leadership styles in schools, especially transformational and democratic approaches, are pivotal in driving teacher motivation and job performance. This comparison reveals that leadership remains a key driver of educational success, particularly in primary schools where teachers play a fundamental role in shaping students' early academic journeys. The study contributes valuable insights by focusing on the specific needs of primary education and how leadership can best support teachers in their vital roles.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing review that highlights the impact of leadership in on teacher job performance in primary Schools. In nut shell, Leadership styles such as transformational, democratic, and instructional approaches are consistently identified as being highly effective in motivating teachers, improving their job satisfaction, and fostering professional growth. This study supports Leithwood and Jantzi's (2006) argument that transformational leadership, with its focus on setting a clear vision and supporting teacher development, positively impacts both teachers and students. Similarly, Hallinger and Heck's (2010) emphasized on creating an environment of continuous improvement echoes the importance of leadership in guiding teachers toward better instructional practices.

The study also draws attention to the need for flexibility in leadership styles, as argued by Mumford (2006), who advocated for participative leadership over autocratic approaches. The ability of principals to adapt their leadership strategies to the unique needs of their schools is crucial for creating an environment where teachers feel valued, motivated, and supported. This flexibility is especially important in primary schools, where teachers play a critical role in developing students' core academic skills, as noted by Sanders and Rivers (1996). While the literature consistently emphasized the positive impact of transformational and democratic leadership, the study also highlighted the potential drawbacks of laissez-faire and autocratic styles, which can lead to reduced teacher motivation and job dissatisfaction. Therefore, the findings suggested that school leaders must carefully consider the leadership styles they

employ to foster a positive and productive school culture. this study provides valuable insights into the practical implications of leadership styles in primary schools, reinforcing the need for school administrators to focus on leadership development as a key strategy for improving teacher performance and student outcomes. The study contributes to the broader body of knowledge on school leadership, particularly in developing countries, and offers practical recommendations for educational reform that prioritizes leadership training and development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the critical role of principal leadership styles in influencing teacher job performance, particularly in primary schools. The findings underscore that leadership approaches such as transformational, democratic, and instructional leadership significantly contribute to teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness, which are key determinants of student outcomes. As supported by the literature, leadership not only shapes the professional development of teachers but also cultivates an environment that promotes collaboration, innovation, and sustained improvement in teaching practices. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of flexible leadership styles that adapt to the specific needs of the school.

This flexibility allows principals to create a supportive environment that not only enhances teacher performance but also promotes student success. Ultimately, the study provided valuable insights into the practical implications of leadership styles in educational settings. It revealed the need for school administrators and policymakers to focus on leadership development as a key strategy for improving teacher performance and student outcomes, particularly in primary schools. By aligning leadership styles with the goals of school reform, educational institutions can foster a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth that benefits both teachers and students.

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