Examining the Impact of Principal's Leadership Level on Job Embeddedness of College Faculty: A Qualitative Inquiry of Higher Education in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This research aimed to explore the leadership level of principals and to what extent it affects the job embeddedness of college faculty. It was also the intent of the study to uncover the reasons for the leadership level and job embeddedness of faculty. In this study, five leadership levels proposed by John Maxwell were used to measure the level of leadership. The job embeddedness level of faculty was determined by using an interview protocol exclusively prepared for the purpose. The researcher gained data from principals and college faculty in Punjab by using the criterion sampling technique.

Methodology: The methodology of the study included the transcendental constitutive phenomenological approach used in this study. Data were analyzed using software named NVivo12 Plus. This software helped in generating nodes, codes, and finally themes. These themes were confirmed by using techniques of word cloud, word tree, and word frequency.

Findings: The findings of the study concealed that the leadership level of college principals is high and it is a major cause of job-embeddedness of college faculty. Faculty members of colleges are also found highly embedded.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the leadership level of the principal is a major factor that is the key to success in leveraging the performance of the staff of educational institutes and the same is in the case of job embeddedness of faculty.

Keywords: Level of Leadership, Job Embeddedness, College, Faculty.

Introduction

Higher education institutions are facing many challenges with the changing scenario of educational organizations. Lack of visionary and dynamic leadership and retention of employees are also included in these challenges. The role of leadership is of key importance in the attainment of success in any educational institute (Russell, Gonzales & Barkhoff, 2021). Leadership plays a dynamic role and has a strong effect on the personnel of the organization. Effective leadership is also necessary to cope with the challenges of modern educational organizational culture. It is the responsibility of leadership to face the

challenges of the modern world. It has become indispensable for academic leaders to be equipped with leadership skills and be proactive to deal with organizational challenges. It is also obligatory for them to prepare a professionally developed and trained workforce to meet the challenges of the modern world (Zimmerman et al., 2020). With all walks of life, the higher education department is also facing many challenges. It needs visionary and better leaders. An academic leader must possess the qualities and charisma necessary to make his organization better (Lanier,2021). Style of leadership is very important in this regard.

The style of leadership has a great effect on the relationship between employees and the head of the institute (Renigunta, Mohammad &Amidi, 2022). It is the leadership that enables the employees and organization to grow professionally. Ullah et al., (2022) are of the view that leadership also embeds employees in the organization. Those organizations usually perform better and retain employees. Leadership plays a vital role in their retention (Jamali et al., 2022). There is a pile of literature about the style of leadership in academia but no study defines which level of leadership is required to enable employees to stick to their job. This phenomenon is called job embeddedness. This study is the maiden research to fill this knowledge gap.

The five Levels of leadership are proposed by John Maxwell (2011). These levels include ***Position, Permission, Production, People Development, and Pinnacle***. These levels help in finding out and verifying the leadership level of principals. The model of ***job embeddedness*** by Ramesh & Gelfand (2010) was used to find out the level of job embeddedness of college faculty. This study was designed to elicit the views of principals and college faculty to explore the extent of the phenomenon of leadership level and whether it is a cause of the job embeddedness level of college faculty.

Review of Literature

Higher education institutes are the hub to produce manpower for the country. The productive environment of any HEI enhances the capability of employees working there which results in the form of better output for society. It is the vision and charisma of any academic leader which enables faculty members to grow professionally and also embeds faculty members in the job. Leadership is an activity that brings sustainable change with his vision. Good academic leaders have cordial relationships with faculty. The complex scenario of the educational world makes it difficult for academic leadership to keep pace with modern society (Gaus et al., 2022).

Recent research by McCauley & Palus (2021) provides empirical evidence that a leader plans strategically and engages all stakeholders to play their roles. Organizations have a target to retain good employees. Retaining learned and well-qualified workers is the biggest challenge for today's higher education institutes (Abdelrehman, 2022). Now a day's HEI demands leaders who can save organizational memory and foster trust between the administration and teaching faculty (Iqbal &Sulej,2022).In modern times, the focus is shifted from preparing managers to preparing leaders who stimulate change in organizations and employees. They direct the energy toward establishing relationships between academic leaders and teaching faculty. Academia needs to learn the art of retaining good faculty. It helps to improve the sustainability of educational organizations. Now we can see that focus is on the development of leaders instead of enhancing managerial skills (Parveen et al., 2022).

Organizations are spending lots of resources to embed employees in their job. It is essential for the success of any organization to retain corporate memory (Huang et al., 2021). The latest study by Ghani et al., (2022) proved that many factors help to retain employees and leadership is one of them. There is a pile of literature on the effectiveness of leadership to bring innovation to work and enhance the retention of employees in HEI. A knowledge gap is found in the literature. It indicates that no research to date is found about the level of leadership at the tertiary level in Pakistan's higher education context.

Maxwell (2011) gave the idea of five levels of leadership that enable a leader to be more effective for the organization. These five levels are *position, permission, production, people development, and pinnacle*.

The *Position* level indicates that the leader has only a job title at this point. He doesn't have any cooperation or working relationship with the faculty. Bibi, Kanwal& Parveen (2022) shed light on the essence of leadership. He says that the journey of a leader starts with self-awareness. Leadership is also a journey of improvement for the leader himself. He should have faith in himself. He must have trust and good working relationships with followers/employees. Northouse (2018) suggests that discovering the self is the start of a journey of leadership. Maxwell (2008) is of the view that *"If you want to lead, you need to grow"*.A person who is supposed to lead; he/she must know to improve. The improvement of a leader is the improvement of the organization.

At the *permission* level of leadership, the leader has cordial working relations with employees of the organization and both sides cooperate for the better performance. Effective relations are the result of mutual trust between leader and follower. Making a team and facing challenges with the follower will take the leader to the next level of leadership.

The third level of leadership is *production* in which not only the leader but the employees/followers also become productive. The leader helps them to do well. Productivity needs to be executed and leadership motivates them. Performing tasks and facing challenges together bring leaders and followers close to each other. It is essential to be consistent in performance and accomplishing tasks to create a momentum of productivity. Raising high slogans does not determine success. It is also necessary to be successful and adopt practical measures before teaching success lessons to your team (Maxwell & Maslow, 2023).

The fourth level of leadership is *people development*. At this level, the leader chooses the appropriate person for the task completion. He knows the potential and capabilities of the people working in the organization. This is the result of all previous levels that a leader now has relations with followers and knows their capabilities. He can now set goals and can estimate the expected performance from followers. He can now easily guide them. The farsightedness of the leader helps people to grow fast. The leader spreads the culture of ownership so that people in the organization consider themselves responsible for the attainment of organizational goals.

The fifth and topmost point is the *pinnacle* that proves that the in charge of the organization develops prospective leaders for organization. This level can rarely be found in organizations. The leader creates a productive environment for better output of the organization. He leaves a legacy for coming leaders in the future.

Effective leadership is considered to be an important factor in the success and job satisfaction of employees (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020) Researchers like Erdogan et al., 2002; Kapil, & Rastogi, 2018, and Ferreira, 2017 provided empirical evidence that leader plays a great role in the progress of HEI. It also enables employees to be embedded in their job. Embeddedness is the other name for retention (Ampofo & Karatape, 2022). It is the group of factors that stick an employee to the job. Job embeddedness is of two kinds on the job & off the job. There are three factors of job embeddedness i.e. fit, link, and sacrifice. Ghaffar & Khan (2017) provided empirical evidence that in the latest research members of college faculty in HED, Punjab are highly embedded in the job but no study is found to see the extent of the effect of the leadership level of principals on job embeddedness of college faculty members.

In this study, the researcher studied the effect of the level of leadership of college principals on the job embeddedness of college faculty. It's a maiden study in this field.

Research Objectives

1) To determine the leadership level of college principals using John Maxwell's approach**.**
2) To find out the reasons for the identified leadership level of college principals on the embeddedness in the job of college faculty.
3) To find out the job embeddedness level of members of college faculty.
4) To know the reasons behind the job embeddedness of members of College faculty.

Problem Statement

In the modern era of technology where lots of demographics are affecting organizations and their heads. The five levels of leadership are in need to be explored i.e. how they affect the organization, style, and behavior of employees. This research checked the knowledge gap and population gap found in previous research and it was found that no study on this topic exists in literature regarding the effect of leadership on job embeddedness of college faculty.

Significance of the Study

This study filled the knowledge gap as there was no study on this topic exists in previous literature. No empirical evidence was found regarding the effect of levels of leadership proposed by John Maxwell (2011) on the job embeddedness of faculty. Job embeddedness is also relatively a new construct that needs to be investigated. This study filled this gap. This study also took faculty at the tertiary level which is under-researched in the context of higher education institutes. This proves the significance of the study as it filled the population gap.

Methodology

The research was qualitative by nature. Qualitative research helps to find out the views and feelings and experiences of people under research. Alhazmi&Kaufmann, 2022 are of the view that qualitative research helps to explore a subjective side of reality and it enables researchers to explore the "Why & How" of certain phenomena. This approach separates the phenomena from the lived experiences of participants. A *transcendental phenomenological approach* was used in this research. The transcendental phenomenological approach helps in exploring human experience by separating it from the whole phenomenon (Dodgson, 2023). It helps in tracing human thinking while going through any experience.

Instrument

The interview protocol was developed exclusively to elicit the views of the participants of the study. The interview protocol for principals was based on the levels of leadership given by John Maxwell (2011). An interview guide for college faculty was developed based on literature by Ghaffar & Khan (2017). Twenty-two questions including demographics were asked by principals and 18 questions including demographics were asked to college faculty members. Instruments were translated into Urdu so that questions can be easily understood by participants. Instruments were validated by renowned educationists who were experts in Urdu and English language.

Sample

In qualitative research, criterion sampling is considered to be most appropriate while conducting such studies. Information-rich cases which met predetermined criteria were selected for the interviews. 26 Principals of colleges and 20 faculty members were included in it. These principals and faculty members were selected from 3 districts i.e. Kasur, Sheikhupura, and Nankana Sahib, of the Lahore Division. Formal consent was sent to participants. Upon receiving back the consent form, interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted till the stage of saturation.

Table 1: *Employment status of interviewees/Principals*

Sr. No	Designation	Number of Participants	Participants of 3 districts (Nankana sahib, Kasur, Sheikhupura) of the Lahore Division
1	Lecturer	6	
2	Assistant Professor	5	
3	Associate Professor	8	
4	Professor	7	

Table 2**:** *Employment Status of Interviewees/college faculty members*

Sr. No	Designation	Number of Participants		Participants of 3 districts (Nankana sahib, Kasur, Sheikhupura) of the Lahore Division
1	Lecturer	4		
2	Assistant Professor	6		
3	Associate Professor	7		
4	Professor	3		

Procedure of Study

After the preparation of the interview protocol, participants were contacted and consent was taken. One-on-one interviews were conducted and recorded. Later on, all interviews of principal and college faculty members were transcribed and answers to all questions were entered in NVivo 12 plus software.

Data Analysis

After the complete entry of all interviews in NVivo 12 plus software file, nodes were extracted in the first stage later nodes formulated codes and codes generated themes of study. Qualitative research is very rigorous and it requires lots of hard work and time from the researcher. It is a laborious process to identify themes. These themes were later verified with the help of the verification techniques like word frequency lists, word clouds, and word tree maps respectively.

Findings of the Study

The software created the following themes of the given data. The use of NVivo was very helpful in this procedure. This project map was created of the data by NVivo obtained from principals indicating the occurrence of the codes in the themes. Professional development of the faculty, style of working, and attitude of faculty are the main themes of study.
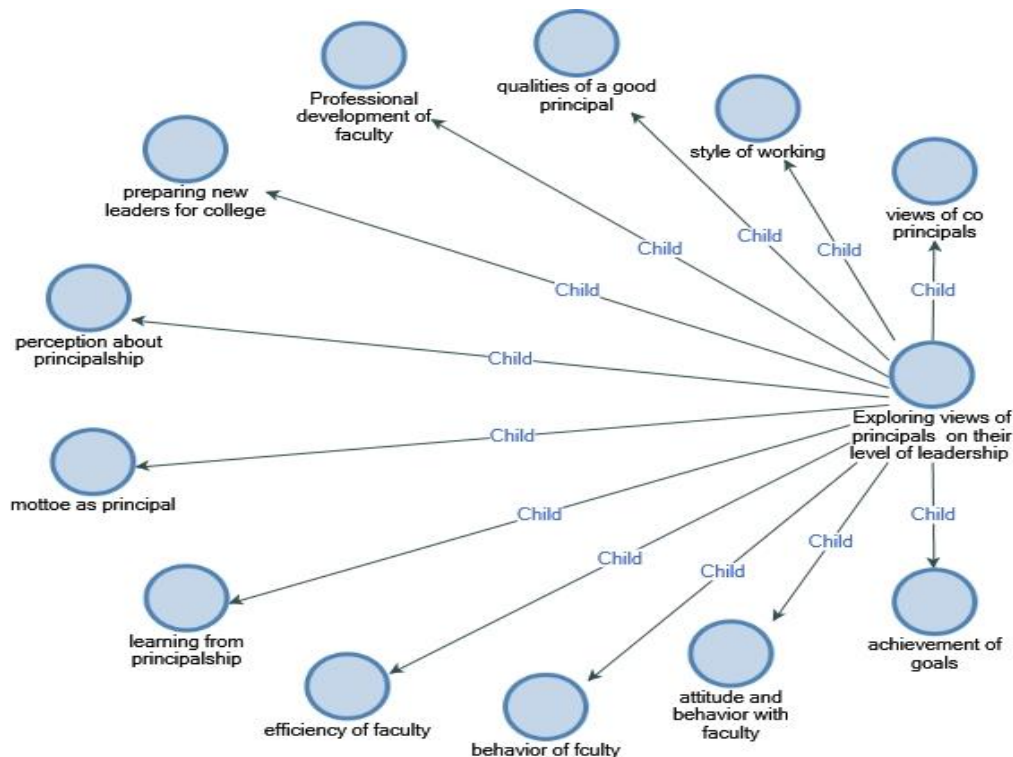

Figure 1: *Project map of data extracted from views of principals*

Professional Development of Faculty

Principals emphasized the launch of proper professional development programs for college faculty. They unanimously expressed the idea that professional development enhances the working capacity of the organization. According to the views of a college principal professional development of faculty carries a hundred percent weightage. One-day or three-day sessions don't fulfill the need of this area. He was of the view that,

> "It is essential to launch a professional development program regularly as there is a dire need to launch it. A well-trained faculty is a need of the colleges."

Achievement of Goals

It is essential to have a proper team to achieve any goal. If a leader knows the capabilities of staff, He can easily achieve goals.

A principal reported that;

> "Choosing the right person for the right job is the key to the efficient working of the organization."

Style of Working

Principals were of the view that they correct the mistakes in time. Their timely action makes the achievement of any task easy. They arrange meetings, discuss tasks and make teams to accomplish the goal. The style of working as described by principals indicates that they don't compromise on performance. A principal said,

> "I do not compromise on work. I always think about making the performance better and in this regard, I have computerized the examination system in my college so that we can save time and give an efficient response."

Perceived Level of Leadership

Principals reported that they are at the fourth level which is "*People Development*. Most of the participants reported that they are feeling improvement in their performance and command of work. Principalship, for them, is an excellent chance to grow and learn new things. A female principal expressed his feelings,

> "I am learning new things. The principalship is an excellent opportunity to learn. It is giving me clarity of goals, the art of making teams and achieving goals."

Preparing New Leaders

Participants of the study described in detail that they are preparing leaders in their organizations for the future. An interviewee answered that

> "I have a group of senior faculty members who can easily manage this college after my retirement. They all are well aware of the job description of principal and they have leadership qualities also."

Relations with Faculty

They have good relations with faculty members and often give special attention to the less motivated faculty members. Achievement of goals is very important according to all participants. Principals expressed pleasure in the completion of the tasks by their faculty. One interviewee expressed his feeling in these words.

> "The faculty respects me and wants to learn more from me as often they come to consult me".

The principals are enthusiastic. They want the faculty to professionally grow. Principals reported that they try to do full justice while choosing faculty members for the task.

Efficiency of Faculty

Participants of the study consider that the faculty members of their respective colleges pay attention to the tasks given to them. They are linked to the job and give priority to professional matters.   One respondent praised his college faculty in these words,

> *"My staff members are energetic and efficient. Most of them give priority to doing things on time. They seek guidance if needed and do things in a better way."*

Perception and Motto as Principal

The participant of the study shared their views about principalship that it is an excellent opportunity to learn and it is their motto to develop faculty and institutions. Principalship gives them a chance to learn new things every day.

The figure given below shows the themes extracted from data obtained from college faculty and the weightage of references they have in the data. The most preferred themes are views about principals and leadership, perceived level of leadership of the principal, relationship with principals, and attitude of principal.
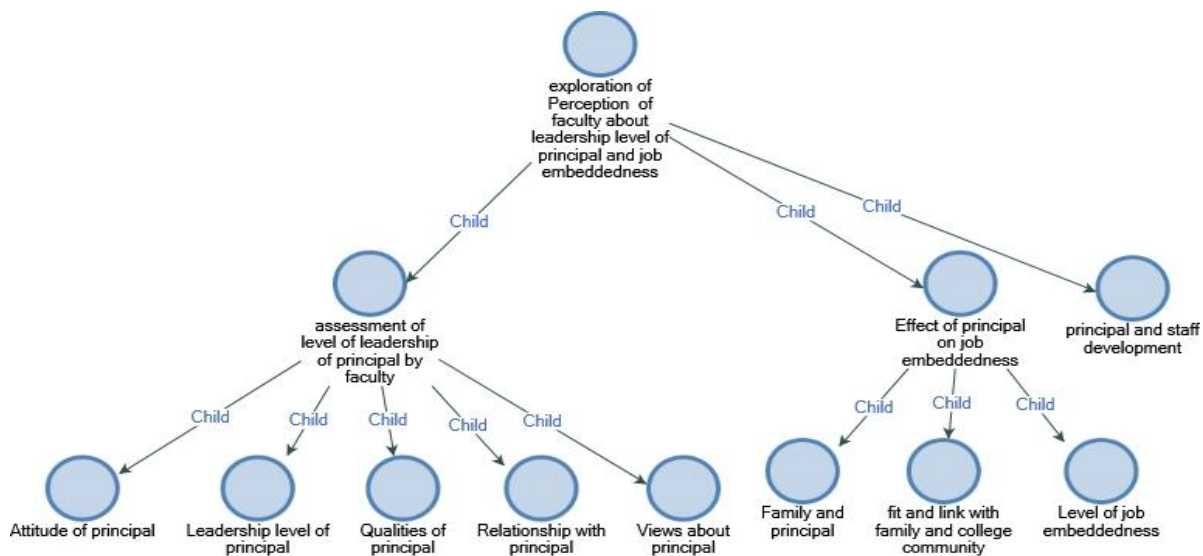
Figure 2: *Project map of themes extracted from views of college faculty*

The themes extracted from data elicited from faculty indicated that they consider their principals suitable for leading the current organization.

Attitude of Principal

College faculty members reported that their current principals are professional, efficient, and visionary. They know their job description. They pay attention and give time to faculty they consider the principal as a key factor in their attachment to the job. The principals provide guidance whenever needed.

A faculty member said,

> *"I have good professional bonding with my principal".*

Leadership Level of Principal

According to the staff members, their current working principal is standing at the topmost level which is the "*Pinnacle*" in the hierarchy given by John Maxwell. The faculty considers them experts as instructional leaders.

Qualities of Principal

A good principal possesses better professional skills. College faculty said that an excellent principal should possess qualities like punctuality, affection, good managerial skills, and a proactive approach to work.

Effect of Principal on Job Embeddedness of Faculty

Participants of this research reported that principals play a fundamental role in determining the extent of their embeddedness in the job. In Pakistan's context family of faculty members does not interact with the principal. College faculty members feel themselves embedded in the community and family. However, the relationship between the faculty member, the principal, and the job has a strong effect on him and his family.

Level of Job Embeddedness of Faculty

Members of the faculty consider themselves highly embedded in the job. Community and organization play a vital role in their embeddedness. Leaving the current community and organization can cause a loss.

A participant expressed his thoughts that,

> "I am highly embedded in the job. I and my family cannot get separated from our current community and family. It may cause a huge loss.

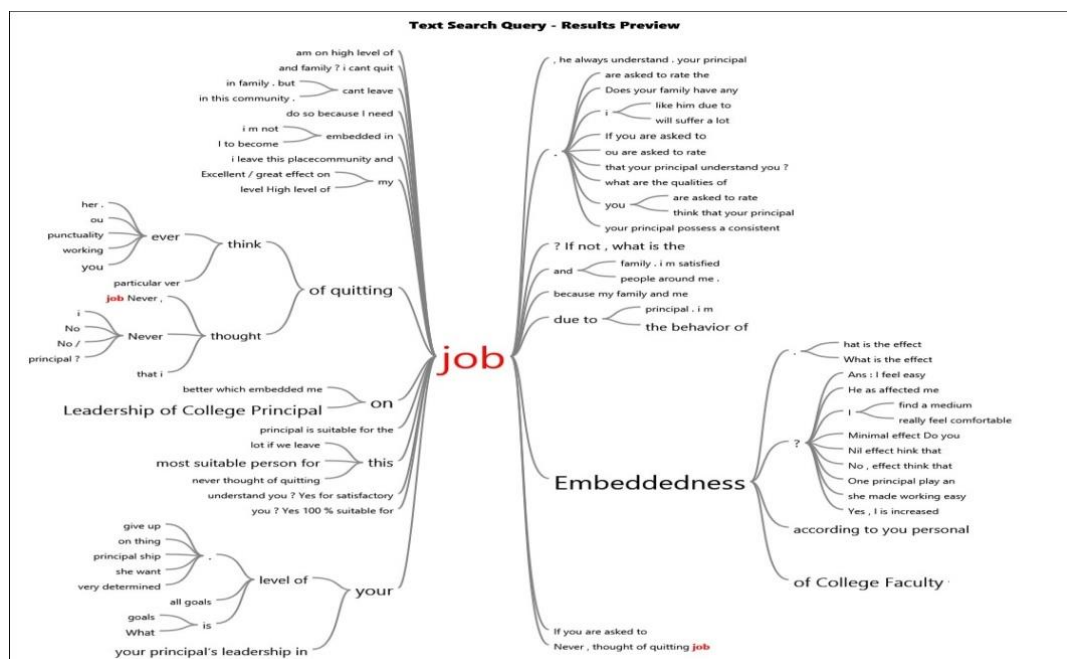These themes were verified by using different techniques i.e. word tree analysis and word cloud.

Figure 3: *Word tree of views of college faculty*

Figure 4: *Word tree of views of college principals*

Another verification technique was applied to authenticate the themes that emerged from the data. The word cloud technique helped in this process. Word cloud highlights the words from the views of participants based on their frequency. The following figure shows the frequent usage of words in conversation while the interview process.

A word tree map helped to identify the patterns of conversation and views of interviewees. It enables researchers to explore the talk patterns so that meaningful conclusions can be drawn from data with its help. Principal and job embeddedness are the keywords in the data. The connections of these two words with other words helped in identifying the actual meaning of talk. Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the conversation patterns of data obtained from principals and college faculty respectively.

Figure 5: *Word cloud of views of principals*

Word frequency lists also indicated the frequency of frequently used words. Word frequency lists also verified it. A huge list authenticated the word cloud results. The word frequency list depicts the occurrence, span, and weighted percentage of a word.

Table 3: *Variables*

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Work	4	23	1.66
Time	4	22	1.59
Good	4	19	1.37
Learn	5	17	1.23
Give	4	16	1.15
Trust	5	16	1.15
Never	5	15	1.08
Professional	12	14	1.01
Faculty	7	13	0.94
Also	4	12	0.87
Opportunity	11	12	0.87
People	6	12	0.87
Achieve	7	11	0.79
Perform	7	10	0.72
Better	6	9	0.65
Development	11	9	0.65

Figure 6: *Word cloud of views of college faculty*

Table 4: *Variables*

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Effect	6	7	4.22
Development	11	6	3.61
Good	4	6	3.61
Importance	10	6	3.61
Learn	6	6	3.61
Job	3	4	2.41
College	7	3	1.81

Embedded	8	3	1.81
Advantage	9	2	1.20
Arranged	8	2	1.20
Better	6	2	1.20
Motivated	9	2	1.20
Principal	9	2	1.20
Self	4	2	1.20
Suggestions	11	2	1.20
Training	8	2	1.20
Principals	10	1	0.60
Productive	10	1	0.60
Profession	10	1	0.60
Professionals	13	1	0.60
Punctuality	11	1	0.60
Regularity	10	1	0.60
Resources	9	1	0.60
Respectful	10	1	0.60
Satisfied	9	1	0.60

Discussion

This is the maiden research in this field. Inquiring about the phenomenon of the level of leadership between male and female principals revealed that the college principals are standing at the fourth level of leadership which is *People development*. Principals are eager to see faculty growing professionally and it elevates the performance of the organization. Some other aspects came into consideration while conducting this study.

Female principals were standing at the highest level of leadership which is *Pinnacle*. They were more enthusiastic and determined to change in organizations. It confirms the myth prevailing in higher education departments that women are better administrators. This result of the study confirms the results of the research of Josanov-Vrgovic&Pavlovic (2014). This study also provides empirical evidence that women are better administrators. Participants consider that the experience has a strong effect on the leadership level of college principals. The outcomes show one different aspect of experience does not affect the "Position" level of leadership. Principals under study reported that professional development is the need of the hour. They consider it inevitable for the growth of the organization. They emphasized launching a proper faculty development program. They are of the view that continuous motivation and timely correction of mistakes enhances the performance of employees. All participants expressed satisfaction with the performance of employees. The results of this study have opened many avenues for future research. Collaboration, teamwork, professional skills, cordial relations, and efficiency are the reasons for this level of leadership. College faculty is standing at the highest level of job embeddedness. The reasons for the embeddedness are the positive attitude of the principal, guidance, and collaboration. Some other aspects also came forward while exploring the phenomena of job embeddedness.

Married participants of the study consider marriage as a key reason for their job-embedded and linked to their job. The same was in the case of participants whose spouses were in the same profession. Experience is also a strong reason for the level of job embeddedness of faculty. It will be a great loss for them if they leave their current community and jobs. It will also affect their family. It proves that they have a strong link with the community and their job. This result validates the results of a study by Ghaffar & Khan (2017).

Conclusion

This study is unique in this field. It provides a base for future research. It is a novice research that filled many gaps in the field. This study filled many knowledge gaps as it unveiled many aspects of the effect of leadership theory on job embeddedness. This study also fills the empirical gap as no study on this topic was done before this. So this study is an effort to fill this gap. This study is also very unique as it also fills the population gap. A population gap occurs when some group, ethnicity age group, or field is under-researched (Robinson, Saldanah &Mckoy 2011).In the Higher Education department, the college wing is under-researched. This study took it as its sample which showed interesting and unique aspects of the theory of leadership and job embeddedness in Pakistan's cultural and educational context. Another aspect that needs to be considered in further research is that participants reported their principal is standing at the pinnacle level of leadership but principals personally reported that they are at the fourth level of leadership which is people development. It is a practical knowledge gap. It invites new researchers to investigate and uncover the reasons for the existence of this contradiction. More studies should be done to see the role of different demographics on leadership and job embeddedness.

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