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Principals' Leadership Practices Comparison: Case of High and Low Performing Higher Secondary Schools of Lahore

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Abstract



Effective school leadership is crucial for student performance and school improvement. This study explores leadership practices in high and low performing secondary schools of Lahore, Pakistan, with a focus on the roles of principals in school performance and improvement. Using a mixed-methods research design, this study combines quantitative data from structured questionnaire and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with purposively selected principals from high and low-performing schools. Descriptive statistical techniques have been used to analyze quantitative data, whereas thematic analysis has been used to analyze qualitative data. The findings reveal significant differences between the practices of principals working in high and low performing schools. High performing principals exhibit proactive approach, collaborative leadership styles, emphasizing vision development and staff empowerment. In contrast, low performing leaders tend to be passive and bureaucratic, focusing mainly on administrative tasks instead colleagues development and school improvement. The study offers recommendations to improve leadership practices in low performing schools, such as encouraging principals to actively engage in vision development, empowering staff through delegation and involving them in decision making, and prioritizing staff professional development despite resource constraints. These findings further recommend fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing student outcomes and school performance.

Keywords: High and Low Performing Schools, Principals Leadership Practices, Professional Development, Interpersonal Relationships, Development of School Vision.

Introduction

Effective leadership practices are essential for organizational success, as leaders inspire, stimulate, collaborate, and innovate to achieve remarkable results. They can translate principles into actions, visions into realities, challenges into opportunities, individuality into harmony, and risks into rewards. School leadership, in particular, plays a pivotal role in advancing educational institutions, impacting both student performance and overall school improvement. As Derek (2009) and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) emphasized, school heads are crucial for successfully implementing educational reforms. Across many countries, educational systems have emphasized the importance of educational leadership for efficiency and progress. The study by Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2005) investigated the characteristics and practices of successful principal leadership in Australian schools. Using a case study approach, the researchers aimed to identify the key factors contributing to effective school leadership and how these influence school outcomes. Successful principal leadership is multifaceted, encompassing visionary leadership, instructional focus, strong relationship-building, effective resource management, adaptability, community engagement, and a commitment to student outcomes. These elements collectively contribute to creating and sustaining high-performing schools.

In Pakistan's education system, the performance of higher secondary schools greatly depends on their principals' leadership practices. To ensure educational quality, principals focus on improving staff performance. The current study aimed to compare the leadership practices of the principals in high-performing and low-performing higher secondary schools. Hogan (1994) underscores the

importance of leadership in organizational success, highlighting its role in stimulating progress and creativity. Leadership is an art that involves developing processes, motivating people, and achieving organizational goals. Singboorana (2001) describes leadership as motivating a group of individuals to achieve certain goals. Administrators, as leaders, should focus on effective leadership practices to enhance institutional excellence. Bateman and Zeithaml (1999) emphasize the need for skilled leaders to navigate organizational complexities and challenges. Drucker (2002) stresses the significance of organizational leadership, emphasizing the need for leaders with prior knowledge and commitment. Kaplan (1975) and Hickman & Silva (1984) highlight the importance of effective leadership in successful schools, urging the development of new leadership models. Elmore (2008) views leadership as a collection of established actions based on knowledge, skills, and behaviors.

Effective school leadership is pivotal in shaping the educational outcomes of students and the overall performance of schools. Senge (1992) identified key leadership practices necessary for creating successful learning organizations, which include systems discerning, team building, shared vision, and intellectual models. Johnston (1997) extended Senge's model by adding comprehensive structure, operational communication linkages, professional development programs, and instructional leadership as essential components in the growth of a learning institution. Ford's (1995) study on primary school principals in Melbourne identified eight critical result areas: school climate, vision and direction, curriculum oversight, resource management, staff selection, performance improvement, organizational structure, and policy support. Ford emphasized that effective leadership is associated with a collaborative school environment, vision sharing, and proactive problem-solving. Notably, Ford found significant gender differences in leadership ratings, with female principals placing higher value on collaboration, future planning, and instructional support. Gurr (1996) conducted extensive research on secondary school principals in Victoria, highlighting the importance of transformational leadership, which emphasizes future direction, accountability, and responsiveness. Gurr's findings indicated that contemporary school leadership roles are evolving, with principals increasingly focusing on external relationships and delegating daily operational tasks to senior staff. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) categorized essential leadership practices into three domains: setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization. Effective leadership practices are crucial for fostering a collaborative school culture and enhancing student performance (Caldwell, 1998). Several studies have demonstrated that effective school leadership significantly impacts student outcomes (Boyan, 1988; Dinham, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano, 2005). Jantzi and Leithwood (2000) argued that educational leadership indirectly but significantly influences school effectiveness. Wallace (2002) supported this view, asserting that leadership plays a vital role in school improvement. Numerous studies have further established the critical impact of school leadership on student performance (Bishop, 2004; Leithwood, 2004; Mulford & Silins, 2003). Gurr (2003) and Zepeda (2003) emphasized that principals' instructional support to teachers and mentoring significantly enhance teaching quality and student achievement.

Hayes (2004) noted that leadership practices prioritizing pedagogical improvement can elevate student performance. Ainley (2005) highlighted the role of principals in fostering supportive values and professional environments for teachers, which in turn boost student outcomes. Marzano (2005) reported that effective school leaders could improve student test scores by up to ten percentile points through strategic leadership practices. Factors contributing to high school performance include strategic human resource management, quality workforce, teamwork, rewards, and recognition (Guest, 1997; Pfeffer, 1998). Effective school leadership involves creating cohesive teams, promoting a shared vision, and supporting staff development. Conversely, personality clashes, value conflicts, gossip, bullying, poor leadership, heavy workloads, and outdated technology can lead to low performance (Lee, 2004; Pitt, 2005; Schick, 2001; Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Brookover et al. (1979) and Coleman (1966) emphasized the importance of home background and teacher quality in student performance. High-performing schools rely on committed and satisfied teachers, as highlighted by Rowe (2003) and supported by Brown and Wynn (2009), Denton (2009), and Scherer (2005).

The role of school leadership extends beyond individual actions to encompass the involvement of all stakeholders in the school community (Cambone & Weiss, 1994). Successful school leaders build cohesive cultures and lead by example (Manasse, 1986; Organ, 1996). Effective leadership practices ensure organizational resilience and continuous improvement (Blakely &

Moorman, 2005; Leithwood, 2005; Tess, 2003). Principals play a crucial role in supporting teachers' instructional performance and fostering student achievement (Jones, 2009). Leadership practices prioritizing professional development and instructional support create a conducive environment for learning and improvement (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2011). High-quality school leadership is essential for achieving educational goals and enhancing student outcomes (Hopkins, 2001; Sammons, 1999; Gurr, 2005; Leithwood, 2004).

This study compares principals' leadership practices in high and low-performing higher secondary schools. The findings provided insights into effective leadership strategies used by principals of high-performing schools, which those in low-performing schools may adopt to enhance managerial skills, develop a collaborative culture, distribute responsibilities, and improve overall school performance. The rationale for conducting the study is to address existing research gaps and provide insights into educational leadership practices. This study explores the differences in leadership practices between principals of high and low-performing schools, thereby offering valuable information that may be used to improve educational outcomes.

Research Questions

1. Is there any difference in practices of high- and low-performing higher secondary school principals?
2. How do school principals implement effective leadership practices to transform their schools into high-performing institutions, and what factors contribute to the inability of the principals in low-performing schools to adopt these practices?

Methodology

The researchers used mixed method research methodology under pragmatism paradigm for data collection and analysis. Through purposive sampling technique, participants are selected from high-performing and low-performing higher secondary schools of Lahore. The categorization of the schools as high-performing and low-performing is based on the matriculation results of the Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education (BISE), Lahore, for 2017. The schools with a pass percentage of metric results higher than 80% are classified as high-performing, while those with a pass percentage below 80% are classified as low-performing. Based on this categorization researchers selected ten schools from the top and ten from the bottom for data collection to ensure a clear distinction between high- and low-performing schools.

The quantitative data was collected through the structured questionnaire while for qualitative data collection semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals from the selected schools. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and the qualitative data has been analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the key themes and insights related to leadership practices. Quantitative data is analyzed by using descriptive statistical techniques to compare the leadership practices of high-performing and low-performing school principals, while qualitative data from the interviews is analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and insights. The findings from both data sets are then compared and integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the differences in leadership practices between high and low performing schools.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Factor 1: Developing School Vision

Indicator	Category	n	B. av.	Av.	A. av.	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I develop a common and shared school vision.	Low performers	10	3	2	5	3.20	1.23
	High performers	10	0	0	10	5.00	0.00
I consult with my staff in developing the school vision.	Low performers	10	4	3	3	2.70	1.42
	High performers	10	0	0	10	5.00	0.00
I provide clear expectations for students about teaching and learning.	Low performers	10	3	1	6	3.40	1.07
	High performers	10	0	0	10	5.00	0.00
I provide clear expectations for staff about teaching and performance.	Low performers	10	4	0	6	3.40	1.26
	High performers	10	0	0	10	4.90	0.32
I determine school priorities through detailed discussions with my school teachers.	Low performers	10	3	5	2	2.90	1.10
	High performers	10	0	0	10	4.70	0.48
Overall Score of Developing School Vision	Low performers	10				15.6	5.68
	High performers	10				24.6	0.70

The analysis compares the school vision development factors between high-performing and low-performing principals in Lahore. High-performing principals consistently demonstrate stronger agreement with vision-related statements, reflected in higher mean scores across indicators. Notably, they achieve perfect mean scores for indicators 1, 3, and 4, indicating complete alignment with vision development processes. In contrast, low-performing principals exhibit lower mean scores and higher standard deviations, indicating greater response variability. This suggests fewer consensuses among low-performing principals regarding vision development. The findings emphasize the importance of effective vision development for high-performing schools and the need for improvement among low-performing schools in Lahore.

Approach to School Vision Development:

Low-performing: Principals prioritize implementing government policies over fostering a shared vision.

Developing school vision is government's responsibility, I am just supposed to implement the policies defined by the government department. (Low-performing schools head (LPSH) 6)

High-performing: Principals employ proactive strategies like brainstorming sessions and focus groups, emphasizing collaborative vision building.

I prioritize collaborative and cohesive school culture, and I mostly organize focus group discussions with my staff members to develop the school vision and implement the set goals. (High-performing schools head (HPSH) 9)

Perception of School Vision:

Low-performing: Principals perceive the vision as primarily government directives, focusing on implementation.

Government makes decisions and policies and direct us to implement the policies, so being an administrator I fully try to deliver my best. (LPSH 6)

High-performing: Principals see the vision as crucial for school improvement, emphasizing alignment with collective values and inclusivity.

I make policies for developing the school vision to make its performance better and try to make the school environment student friendly. (HPSH 1)

Leadership Style and Vision Alignment:

Low-performing: Principals exhibit transactional leadership styles, emphasizing adherence to directives rather than inspiring staff toward a vision.

I am a bit authoritative and strict kind of person. I declare the school vision to my staff in our annual meeting for 'improvement and rehabilitation', so I think do not need to repeat it many times. (LPSH 8)

High-performing: Principals employ transformational and instructional leadership, involving staff in vision development and fostering commitment to shared goals, aligning with best practices in educational leadership. As one of the respondents stated:

I develop my educational goals to identify the strengths and weaknesses of my instructional leadership style so that I can make this school effective. (HPSH 4)

Factor 2: Distributions of Leadership Responsibilities

Indicator	Category	n	B. av.	Av.	A. av.	M	SD
I distribute leadership responsibilities among staff members, share authority, and promote mutual respect.	Low Performers	10	3	3	4	3.30	1.15
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	5.00	0.00
I empower my staff to participate in the decision-making process.	Low Performers	10	3	5	2	2.90	1.10
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	5.00	0.00
I work with others to improve my school.	Low Performers	10	0	3	7	4.20	0.92
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.80	0.42
I recognize the expertise of my staff and assign their duties according to their abilities.	Low Performers	10	0	3	7	4.10	0.88
	High Performers	10	0	0	10		
Overall Score of Distribution of	Low Performers	10				14.50	3.47

Leadership Responsibilities	High Performers	10	19.50	0.71
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Descriptive analysis reveals insights into leadership distribution among high and low-performing schools. High-performing schools exhibit significantly higher scores in distributing responsibilities and promoting mutual respect (M = 5.00) than low-performing schools (M = 3.30). This suggests that high-performing principals are more inclined to distribute responsibilities and foster respect within the community. Similarly, high-performing schools consistently score higher in empowering staff in decision-making, collaborating to improve the school, and recognizing staff expertise. Overall, high-performing schools demonstrate a proactive approach to leadership distribution and collaboration, highlighting the critical role of effective leadership in driving school improvement and performance.

Recognition of Staff Abilities and Assignment of Tasks:

Low-Performing: Principals in low-performing schools cite teacher shortages as hindering effective delegation of leadership duties.

I have limited teaching staff in the school, so teachers are already burdened, so I do not assign them administrative tasks. (LPSH 2)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools prioritize recognizing staff abilities and assigning tasks accordingly.

I have enough recognition about the skills and abilities of my teaching staff, I often assign different tasks to the teachers as per their skills, so that they can accomplish the tasks effectively and can learn the administrative tasks too. (HPSH 3)

Opportunities for Staff Decision-Making:

Low-Performing: Resource constraints limit the ability of principals in low-performing schools to delegate leadership tasks, especially involvement in decision making process.

Decision making process for school is solely an administrative task, so I prefer to involve my administrative staff only. (LPSH 3)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools actively involve staff in decision-making to empower them in school improvement efforts.

I arrange meetings with my teaching staff and discuss the important issues related to teaching and learning and school improvement, then take decisions with their involvement. I believe that the teaching staff understands those barriers, are hurdle in students' performance. (HPSH 5)

Involvement of Staff in Leadership Practices:

Low-Performing: Principals in low-performing schools need to work on engaging staff in leadership duties, often prioritizing their workload.

I believe the teaching staff should focus on the teaching and learning of the students only, so its duty of the administrative staff to perform the leadership practices. (LPSH 3)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools actively involve staff in leadership practices to foster responsibility and empowerment.

I often involve my staff in performing leadership practices, like, I organize some projects and delegate the authorities to the teachers to take decisions and implement them as per their leadership styles, in order to improve their sense of responsibility. (HPSH 10)

Empowerment and Initiative:

Low-Performing: Principals in low-performing schools manage tasks themselves, assigning duties to teachers primarily for accountability rather than empowerment.

I do most of my tasks with the help of coordinator, if any teacher show her interest in administrative tasks, I assign her managerial tasks only. (LPSH 7)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools focus on empowering staff through leadership responsibilities and encouraging initiative.

I delegate tasks and responsibilities based on the individual's strengths and skills, and I allow them to take initiative too. (HPSH 2)

Factor 3: Involvements and Consultation with Staff

Indicator	Category	N	B. av.	Av.	A. av.	M	SD
I involve and consult my staff members in the process of	Low Performers	10	3	4	3	2.90	0.99

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decision-making.	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.90	0.32
I engage teachers to express their views at staff meetings without any fear.	Low Performers	10	3	5	2	2.70	1.33
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.90	0.32
I encourage my staff members to share their views on different matters.	Low Performers	10	3	5	2	2.70	1.05
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.70	0.48
I solve the school's problems with the cooperation of staff members.	Low Performers	10	0	2	7	3.90	0.74
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.60	0.52
Overall Score of Involvement and Consultation with Staff	Low Performers	10				12.20	3.79
	High Performers	10				19.10	0.74

Significant differences emerge between low-performing and high-performing schools in this analysis of Factor 3: Involvement and Consultation with Staff. High-performing schools consistently prioritize involving and consulting with staff, fostering open communication, and collaborating to address school challenges, and their scores are (M=19.10). Conversely, low-performing schools exhibit lower scores (M=12.20) across these indicators, indicating less involvement and consultation with staff. This practice gap may impact overall school performance, as high-performing schools' emphasis on staff engagement creates a collaborative and supportive atmosphere, potentially leading to better outcomes.

Decision-Making Process:

Low-Performing: Principals in low-performing schools express difficulty involving staff for various reasons, such as overburden on teachers and limited staff, resulting in fewer opportunities for staff input in decision-making.

I feel difficulty involving teaching staff in decision making process, because the teachers grant it as extra job and feel tiresome and hectic. (LPSH 2)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools frequently consult with staff, involve them in decision-making processes, and consider their feedback before making decisions.

I consult most of my issues with my staff and welcome their opinions and suggestions in the decision-making process. This develops a sense of ownership in them. (HPSH 1)

Staff Involvement:

Low-Performing: Principals in low-performing schools have limited staff involvement in administrative tasks, and some express that staff members are unwilling to invest extra time in meetings.

I realized that the teachers do not want to spend extra time for meetings and consider it burden for them. (LPSH 6)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools actively involve staff by organizing meetings, one-on-one discussions, and setting collaborative targets to achieve goals.

I involve my teaching staff in decision makings and give them respect and value for their participation. (HPSH 4)

Respect for Staff Views:

Low-Performing: While some principals in low-performing schools express efforts to involve staff and respect their opinions, others indicate they have the ultimate decision-making authority.

I to extent involve my teaching staff in decision making process and give them value. (LPSH 7)

High-Performing: Principals in high-performing schools value and respect the viewpoints of their staff, acknowledging their contributions and involving them in decision-making processes.

I give open opportunity to the teachers to join me in decision making process and appreciate their contribution. (HPSH)

Factor 4: Establishment of Interpersonal Relationship

Indicator	Category	N	B. av.	Av.	A. av.	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I build positive and trusting relationships with my staff.	Low Performers	10	3	2	5	3.50	1.50
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.80	0.42
	Low	10	3	1	6	3.20	1.13

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development of teachers.	Performers						
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.90	0.32
I communicate properly with teachers and give them respect.	Low Performers	10	4	4	2	3.70	0.95
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.70	0.48
I listen to subordinates' problems and try to resolve them.	Low Performers	10	3	2	5	3.20	1.68
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.20	0.42
Overall Score of Establishment of Interpersonal Relationship	Low Performers	10				13.60	4.97
	High Performers	10				18.60	0.97

The analysis compares responses from high and low-performing school principals in Lahore on Factor 4: Establishment of Interpersonal Relationship. The high-performing principals consistently scored "Above Average" across indicators, emphasizing positive relationships, teacher well-being, effective communication, and addressing personal problems. In contrast, low-performing principals showed moderate scores in the "Below Average" category, ranging from 30% to 40%. High-performing principals scored significantly higher in listening to subordinates' problems ($M = 4.20$) than low-performing principals ($M = 3.20$) for Indicator 4. High-performing principals demonstrated proactive and supportive interpersonal relationship building, reflected in their higher mean scores ($M = 18.60$) than low-performing principals ($M = 13.60$). This highlights the importance of establishing effective interpersonal relationships for school performance and leadership effectiveness.

Interpersonal Relationships:

Low-performing: Some low-performing principals acknowledged respect but lacked emphasis on its productivity benefits.

I somehow try to resolve problems and do work on building good interpersonal relationship. (LPSH 4)

High-performing: Many high-performing principals prioritize good relationships with subordinates, seeing it as enhancing productivity.

Reason of my success is to maintain good relationship with my staff. (HPSH 3)

Listening to Personal Problems:

Low-performing: Some low-performing principals showed reluctance or prioritized school tasks over staff issues.

I prioritize to accomplish the schools' tasks instead of solving the personal problems of the staff. (LPSH 7)

High-performing: High-performing principals listen to staff's problems, fostering support and rapport.

I always listen the personal problems of my subordinates and try to resolve them, this improves the performance of my staff. (HPSH 9)

Communication Style:

Low-performing: Low-performing principals are often described as to-the-point or autocratic, hindering open communication.

I am bit authoritative person and I do not want make anybody free in dealing with me , so I am not working on the communication skills improvement of my staff. (PSHH 4)

High-performing: High-performing principals are approachable and charismatic, fostering open-door policies and effective communication.

I am very polite and humble; I have an open-door policy for my subordinates and students to discuss any problems that can affect their performance. (HPSH 8)

Factor 5: Professional Development

Indicator	Category	n	B. av.	Av.	A. av.	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I develop programs for teachers' professional development.	Low Performers	10	10	0	0	1.50	0.53
	High Performers	10	3	5	2	2.90	0.74

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I encourage staff to actively participate in professional development programs.	Low Performers	10	10	0	0	1.50	0.53
	High Performers	10	4	5	1	2.70	0.67
I join professional organizations to participate in activities to improve my personal knowledge and management skills.	Low Performers	10	10	0	0	2.00	0.00
	High Performers	10	3	5	2	2.90	0.74
I arrange ongoing professional development programs for my staff.	Low Performers	10	10	0	0	1.10	0.32
	High Performers	10	7	2	1	2.10	0.94
I provide personal support to staff members.	Low Performers	10	2	3	5	3.60	1.17
	High Performers	10	0	0	10	4.60	0.52
Overall Score of Professional Development	Low Performers	10				9.70	1.83
	High Performers	10				15.20	2.86

Factor 5 of this study examines professional development practices among principals of low and high-performing schools in Lahore. Descriptive analysis reveals significant differences in the implementation of professional development initiatives. High-performing principals organize ongoing professional development programs for staff, reflected in above-average mean scores for indicators 1, 2, and 4. Conversely, low-performing principals show less engagement in professional development activities, with below-average mean scores across the same indicators. High-performing principals prioritize staff support, with all reporting providing personal support to their staff, as indicated by Indicator 5. These findings emphasize the importance of proactive leadership in promoting a culture of unstopped learning and development within schools, leading to improved staff performance and school outcomes.

Leadership Style:

Low-performing: Principals rely on external entities to organize training, adopt a passive stance, and delegate responsibility.

To organize the teacher training program is the duty of the government, so I do not announce any of the training program in schools. (LPSH 6)

High-performing: Principals demonstrate hands-on leadership, participating in training, sharing knowledge, and actively seeking opportunities for improvement.

I try to motivate my staff to join online professional courses and provide the data source for it. (HPSH 8)

Resource Management:

Low-performing: Principals perceive resource limitations as barriers and need more initiative in seeking alternative solutions.

I have limited resources and its hard for me to run such training programs. (LPSH 4)

High-performing: Principals acknowledge resource constraints but overcome them through online courses, external workshops, and prioritizing staff development.

We have limited resources to manage such training sessions so I recommend my staff to attend online workshops. (HPSH 2)

Staff Engagement and Motivation:

Low-performing: Principals have a passive approach to employee engagement, relying on external authorities to organize training.

I have no extra time for attending such self-grooming programs, but I often advice to my staff to attend the training or courses. (LPSH 7)

High-performing: Principals motivate staff by leading by example, providing resources, and fostering a supportive learning environment.

I enroll myself in professional development training courses, and after learning the skills, I manage the workshop sessions in my school and equip my staff with the knowledge. (HPSH 9)

Compare and Contrast Analysis:

Several key patterns emerge when comparing the data from both quantitative and qualitative methods regarding the leadership practices of low and high-performing higher secondary schools in Lahore.

Developing School's Vision:

Low-performing: Principals must prioritize vision development and focus more on implementing standard procedures and government policies. Their leadership style tends to be more transactional and directive.

High-performing: Principals actively develop a vision and set goals, identifying strengths and weaknesses to drive improvement. They exhibit transformational leadership qualities, emphasizing collaboration and empowerment.

Distribution of Leadership Responsibilities:

Low-performing: Principals need help to involve staff effectively due to resource constraints and a reluctance to delegate leadership duties.

High-performing: Principals actively recognize and utilize staff expertise in school improvement efforts, empowering them to make informed decisions and take initiative.

Involvement and Consultation with Staff:

Low-performing: Principals cite resource constraints and a focus on administrative tasks as reasons for their need for more involvement in vision development and decision-making. They also need help effectively involving staff in leadership duties.

High-performing: Principals emphasize staff members' active involvement and engagement in decision-making processes, creating a supportive environment for expressing views and opinions. They recognize staff expertise and empower them to take the initiative.

Establishment of Interpersonal Relationships:

Low-performing: Principals tend to take a more task-focused approach, with less emphasis on building rapport or addressing staff concerns. Their communication style is also more directive.

High-performing: Principals prioritize building strong interpersonal relationships and effective communication with staff, fostering an open-door policy, and addressing staff concerns.

Professional Development:

Low-performing: Principals show a more reactive approach, citing resource limitations and delegating the responsibility for organizing training to external entities. They need hands-on involvement in staff development.

High-performing: Principals exhibit proactive engagement in professional development, actively participating in courses and encouraging staff to do the same. They prioritize staff engagement and motivation.

Discussion

In educational leadership, effective practices are advantageous and indispensable for organizational success. Leaders in educational institutions play an important role in molding the learning environment, determining student outcomes, and fostering overall school improvement. This study delves into the context of higher secondary schools in Lahore, Pakistan, comparing the leadership practices between high-performing and low-performing schools to uncover critical insights for enhancing educational quality. As highlighted by scholars such as Derek (2009) and Robinson et al. (2008), effective school leadership involves a multifaceted approach encompassing visionary leadership, instructional focus, relationship-building, resource management, adaptability, community engagement, and a commitment to student outcomes. These attributes are pivotal in driving school success and align with findings from Gurr et al. (2005), who identified visionary leadership, strong relationship-building, and a focus on student outcomes as key components of successful principal leadership in Australian schools.

The current study mirrors these findings by revealing that high-performing principals in Lahore adopt proactive and collaborative leadership styles. They actively engage in vision development, empower staff through distributed leadership responsibilities, prioritize professional development, maintain open communication, and recognize staff expertise. In contrast, low-performing principals exhibit a more passive and task-focused approach, often constrained by resource limitations and administrative burdens. This leads to less emphasis on vision development, staff empowerment, and effective communication. Comparing these findings with previous studies

underscores the universal significance of effective leadership in educational settings. Scholars like Senge (1992) and Leithwood (2004) have emphasized the transformative impact of leadership practices on school culture and student outcomes. Effective leaders inspire and innovate and create cohesive organizational cultures where all stakeholders feel valued and empowered. In contrast, low-performing principals in Lahore tend to adopt a more passive and task-oriented approach. They need help with vision development and staff involvement due to resource constraints, as well as prioritizing administrative tasks over strategic leadership initiatives. This disparity underscores the critical impact of leadership style on school performance, echoing the findings of previous studies (Hayes, 2004; Marzano, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), emphasizing the transformative potential of proactive leadership in enhancing educational outcomes.

Moreover, the study aligns with global literature on educational leadership, which asserts that proactive, visionary, and collaborative leadership practices are essential for achieving high performance and fostering continuous improvement in schools. Leaders who foster collaborative cultures, empower their staff, and prioritize professional development tend to achieve better outcomes for their schools (Leithwood, 2004; Jantzi & Leithwood, 2000). The study's focus on quantitative data through structured questionnaire and qualitative insights from interviews. The study's approach, utilizing a convergent parallel mixed method, enhances the credibility of its findings by triangulating data sources and perspectives. By examining leadership practices through multiple lenses, the study identifies differences and offers actionable insights for improving leadership effectiveness in educational contexts. These insights are crucial for policymakers, school administrators, and educators seeking to replicate success and address challenges in school leadership.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores that effective leadership is crucial for educational success, transcending geographical boundaries. By comparing leadership practices in Lahore with global literature, it becomes evident that fostering a supportive environment, empowering staff, and prioritizing professional development are key strategies for enhancing school performance. The findings contribute to the academic colloquy on educational leadership and offer practical implications for improving educational outcomes in diverse educational contexts.

Further, high-performing principals in Lahore demonstrate a proactive and collaborative approach to leadership, emphasizing vision development, staff involvement, professional development, communication, and recognition of staff expertise. In contrast, low-performing principals exhibit a more passive and task-focused approach, with less emphasis on vision development, staff empowerment, and communication. These differences in leadership practices likely contribute to the varying performance levels observed in high and low-performing schools. High-performing schools had organized administration, and responses from students and teachers matched those of school heads. In contrast, low-performing schools lacked organization, and students and teachers hesitated to speak against their school heads.

Recommendations

The findings of this study can benefit various stakeholders within the education system. Principals and administrators can gain insights to inform their leadership practices. Policymakers can utilize these insights to inform policy decisions.

1. Low-performing principals are encouraged to develop and communicate a clear and shared vision for their schools, ensuring that all stakeholders understand and are committed to the school's goals and values, as the high-performing schools' principals are practicing.
2. The low-performing schools' principals should implement structures and practices that empower teachers and staff to participate in the decision-making process, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration within the school community, just as the high-performing schools' principals often try to do.
3. Both the principals of low and high performing schools should prioritize ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. This would improve instructional practices and support career growth, enhancing overall school performance.
4. The principals of high-performing schools establish open and transparent communication channels between school leadership, staff, students, and the broader school community to build trust and ensure alignment with the school's vision and objectives. They should also

support the principals of low performing schools in this regard to ensure that they should also practice it to promote a cohesive environment in their schools.

5. Just like high-performing school principals, low-performing school principals should create systems for recognizing and utilizing the expertise and strengths of their staff members, promoting a culture of appreciation, and leveraging their skills to drive school improvement initiatives.
6. There is a need that principals of low-performing higher secondary school should collaborate and consult with their teaching and non-teaching colleagues to develop a caring and supportive school culture to enhance school performance.

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