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PAKISTANI SCHOOLS POSSESS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: PLATITUDE OR REALITY?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to find out the existing level of leadership skills of the principals working in secondary schools in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan on the basis of teacher's perception working with these principals. This study was conducted in 31 secondary schools in Pakistan. A sample of 408 secondary school teachers responded completely to a survey instrument comprising 18 items that measured the levels of three leadership skills: transformational, organizational and behavioral leadership skills. The overall findings reveal that the principals working in these secondary schools seem to possess an overall high level of leadership skills. However, there were variations in the level of leadership skills which may be due to structural capital of these organizations, and past job of the principals as leaders and administrators in other schools. The findings do reveal a strong need for boosting and enhancing leadership skills through leadership training for the school principals prior to their selection as school leaders. At the same time, this study also suggests that the authorities should avoid promoting teachers to the head-post without prior leadership training which is very necessary for school effectiveness in the long run.

Keywords: School leadership, Leadership skills, Quality education, School effectiveness, Education, Pakistan

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INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as the backbone of every country's development. The future of a society depends upon its quality of education. Every country wants social and economic development; therefore it is expected that by promoting education and developing human capital these development goals can be achieved (Khan et al., 2015). The quality of education relies upon the educational leaders, the heads of the schools, colleges or universities. A leader develops the effective organizational routines, sovereignty and social interaction. In this way they make organizations such as schools more productive. These leaders first possess leadership skills and using these skills they develop their faculty to improve student learning. Thus, leaders lacking leadership skills are not accepted as leaders by any group (Silva, 2014). Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000) proposed these leadership skills: to include knowledge skills, social skills, and problem-solving skills. Among them, high quality teaching and high quality of leadership are most necessary for a successful education system (Peleg, 2012).

Various studies have been conducted to find the real problems related to the quality of education in Pakistan. These studies mainly highlighted leadership deficiency in schools. For example, Khan (2013b) whose qualitative study on community schools and Government schools investigated the quality of instructional contribution. Likewise, Andrabi, Das and Khwaja (2008) added that private schools in Pakistan deliver quality education. The main factors behind the private sector success are quality instruction and the monitoring system (Iqbal, 2012). While Alam (2012) observed that the main problem with leadership is that leaders in Pakistani schools are promoted on the basis of teaching experience, although they do not possess leadership skills. The Economic Survey of Pakistan (2013-2014) reveals that Government of Pakistan in its annual fiscal budget allocated 4% of its GDP for the education sector, which is an insufficient amount for education. Training of heads and teachers require massive funding, while the education sector of Pakistan covers this shortfall through foreign funded projects (Khan, 2013). Khan further states that these opportunities can be availed by limited employees; hence there is a dearth of leadership skills in these leaders. To summarize, school leadership in the Pakistan educational system is distressing; the lack of qualification, training and experience of an educational institution leader is posing serious threats to the quality of education in the country.

Early studies conducted in Pakistan compared public and private sector schools in terms of quality education. Those studies highlighted that the main reason for low quality is the leadership skills deficiency of the school leaders. Further, relatively little has been written and researched on the role and impact of educational leaders within the education systems in developing countries, including Pakistan (Rizvi, 2010; Simkins et al., 2003).

In line with these findings, a study was conducted to find the level of leadership skills in the secondary schools of Pakistan Army, Federal Government and Fizaia (Air force). All these schools are selected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as N.W.F.P) province of Pakistan, due to lower human development indicators and typically conservative attitudes to co-education (Andrabi et al., 2006). The majority of schools in this study are co-educational, while in contrast secondary schools operated by the provincial government are single sex based. Further it is found that the role of co-educational schools in country development is more crucial (Andrabi et al., 2006) and researchers can get data from both gender (Male and female teachers) to know the level of principal's leadership skills on the basis of gender. Secondly, this study was carried out to understand how leadership skill



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helps in developing professional staff, and finally to highlight role of professional staff in improving student's learning potential in light of available literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership

Leadership is the high position held by a person in an organization or society, a personal characteristic and a relationship between leaders and followers (Silva, 2014). Thus leadership is not literally existence of a person in an institute; actually it is composed of different factors. James (2015) endorses that leadership should be considered as a process that possesses the ability to affect individuals or groups and motivate them to achieve a common goal. Leadership is said to be a process whereby an individual inspires, motivates and guides employee of an organization to achieve its objectives (Haq, 2011). Leadership and management look the same but they are different (Kotterman, 2006). While Algahtani (2014) expounds that leaders stress on vision and goals and ensure followers are going in the right direction. Lunenburg (2011) gave the characteristics of both leaders and managers. Leaders, he says, have the characteristics such as focusing on people, looking outwards, articulating a vision, creating the future, empowering their colleagues, doing the right things, using influence, resolving conflicts, and acting decisively. Managers have characteristics such as focusing on things, looking inward, executing plans, controlling, directing and coordinating subordinates, doing things right, using authority, avoiding conflicts, and acting responsibly. From these characteristics and way of working it is clear that leadership and management are two different things.

Leadership Skills

Katz (1974) was the first person who proposed that leadership should be skilful and he found that leadership depends mainly on three basic skills: Human or interpersonal skills, technical skills, and conceptual skills (Akinola, 2013). Later, other researchers added more leadership skills. Among these researchers (Mumford et al., 2000) proposed leadership skills: knowledge skills, social skills, problem solving skills. Leaders can be identified through their leadership skills. Thus people who do not possess leadership skills will not be accepted as leaders by any group in any circumstances (Silva, 2014). Skills are social conduct and their components are knowledge, experience and cleverness (Allais, 2012). At the moment we need such leaders who possess leadership knowledge, skills and analytical capability (Peleg, 2012). These skills are compulsory for operating effective organizations. This is the reason that Piaw et al. (2014) stressed on leadership skills acquisition before joining an office as head, as these skills are helpful in administration, planning and evaluation.

Leadership Skills and School Effectiveness

Mumford et al. (2007) stated that for effective school leadership, principals must possess interpersonal, business, and cognitive skills. Several studies have shown a relationship between leadership skills and school effectiveness. These studies explicitly mentioned a strong relationship between leadership and school effectiveness. In some cases there is direct relationship between leadership and school effectiveness, while in other there is an indirect relationship. A study by Duze (2011) also shows that there is a close relationship between principal leadership skills



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and school effectiveness. Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) found leaders who have interpersonal skills, are busy in supporting their staff and putting their efforts into their best performance and as a result they achieve school effectiveness. The Supovitz et al. (2009) study reveals that the principal's leadership skills have a positive impact on the school climate which favour better student outcomes. There is a rare direct effect of leadership on student achievement; however their efforts to make school more effective through antecedent variables is valuable (Muijs, 2011).

RESEARCH GAP

Developed countries have given much attention to the leadership role and skills of the principal to make schools more effective (Akinola, 2013). But the developing world still struggles for such educational leaders. First these leaders require leadership training to make them skilful. Peterson and Van Fleet (2004) proposed that effective principals should have skills such as: decision making, analytical (human, communication, conceptual, interpersonal), administrative, and flexible skills. Richter et al. (2012) stated that school principals should possess leadership skills such as transformational, organizational and behavior skills. Organizational leadership skills refer to the job performed during routine; making sure that everyone abides by rules and regulations; discussing with all stakeholders and maintaining a safe climate (Copland, 2001; Miller, 2003). Transformational leadership may engage and encourage organizational members to be more active by shared decision making and accepting ownership for student success (Richter et al., 2012). Transformational and managerial skills, on the other hand, improve teacher's job satisfaction, school environment and student achievement (Richter et al., 2012). Educational leaders can only show their competencies if they are skilful. The present study provides empirical evidence about the level of leadership skills in sample schools, indispensable for school effectiveness and better student outcomes (Akinola, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study is quantitative in nature. Quantitative study can be generalized for the whole population. Creswell (2013) stated that a quantitative approach is quite suitable for the "identification of factors that influence an outcome" or "understanding the best predictors of an? Outcome" (p. 18). This study is administered through a survey instrument and data collected from secondary school teachers on the basis of their perceptions regarding level of principals leadership skills.

Population and Sampling

Population of the study is made up of secondary school teachers from schools managed by the Federal Government, Pakistan Army and Fizaia (Air force) in KPK, Pakistan. In total 74 schools are listed in as affiliated with these organizations. On average, 15 teachers were selected from each school through random sampling technique from 31 schools. Regional directors of these schools allowed visit to 31 schools.



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Therefore, the total number of respondents was 465. For data collection the close ended questionnaire was used that encapsulate the three dimensions (comprising of 18 items) of principal leadership skills. Survey instrument were distributed to a total of 465 teachers; some 408 complete and reliable questionnaires were returned and response rate was 90.6 %.

Instrumentation

A close-ended questionnaire was developed as the data collection instrument. It comprises two parts; Part-A: demographic data; Part-B: leadership skills measurement. The leadership skills construct comprises three perspectives: transformational leadership skills (TLS), organizational leadership skills (OLS) and behavioural leadership skills (BLS). A five-point Likert scale is used, starting from *1- does not exhibit this skill at all, 2-Exhibits this skill but not effective, 3- Exhibit this skill and somewhat effective, 4- Exhibit this skill effectively, and 5- Exhibit this skill very effectively.* The 18 items in this part have been adopted from Richter et al. (2012). This instrument is already used by Richter et al. (2012) for knowing the level of leadership skills of the principal necessary for school effectiveness and the current study is using it with permission from the researcher who developed it.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS, V-22. For measuring level of principal's leadership skills, the researcher used percentage distribution technique. Since data in hand is Likert scale data, so means of the principal's leadership skills were determined and percentage distribution technique is adopted to report it.

Polat (2009) conducted a study in Turkey to measure the level of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) through the perception of principals, another study was conducted by Dikshit and Dikshit (2014) in India to measure the level of OCB perceived by senior officers and average of arithmetic means given by these researchers are as follows:

1.00_1.79 as quite low, 1.80_2.59 as low, 2.60_3.39 as medium, 3.40_4.19 as high, 4.20_5.00 as quite high.

Since Pakistan has a different environment and different educational system as compared with Turkey and India, slight changes have been made by dividing average arithmetic means into three categories of low, medium and high and an equidistant interval has been chosen for interpreting these three arithmetic averages as follows:

1.00_1.33 as Low, 2.34_3.67 as Moderate, 3.68_5 as High



RESULTS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Sample

Demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	177	43.4
	Female	231	56.6
Age	25-30 Years	121	29.7
	31-35 Years	97	23.8
	36-40 Years	69	16.9
	More than 40	121	29.7
Professional Qualification	Certified teacher (C.T)	13	3.2
	Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)	202	49.5
	Master in education (M.Ed.)	130	31.9
	Others	63	15.4
Experience	Less than one year	1	0.2
	1-5 Years	7	2.0
	6-10 Years	83	20.0
	11-15 Years	249	61.0
	16-20 Years	68	17.0
	More than 20 Years	0	0.0
Academic Qualification	Undergraduate	2	0.5
	Graduate	71	17.4
	Master	320	78.4
	Others	15	3.7

N = 408 teachers

A total of 408 respondents out of 465 responded completely, one hundred and seventy-seven (43.4%) were male, while the rest of two hundred and thirty one (56.6%) teachers were female. In terms of age, 29.7% of the sample was aged between 25 to 30 years, while 23.8% was between 31 to 35 years, another 16.9% were aged between 36 and 40 years, and the remaining 29.7% were aged more than 40 years. Thirteen (3.2%) teachers are certified teachers, while two hundred and two (49.5%) teachers possess a bachelor degree in education, and another one hundred and thirty teachers (31.9%) had their Masters, and the rest or sixty three (15.4%) teachers possess other professional qualifications such as M. Phil., Diploma, and so forth. With regard to experience, 2.2% teachers have less than 5 years' experience, while 20% possess between 6 to 10 years of experience.



Majority (61%) of the teachers possess between 11 to 15 years of experience. The remaining 17% have more than 15 years of experience. In particular, none of the sample has more than 20 years of experience as teacher. As for the academic qualifications, it can be noted that less than 1% teachers are undergraduates, while 17.4% of the sample are graduates. Majority of the sample (78.4%) have Master's degree with another 3.7% having even higher degrees.

Reliability, Validity and Normality

Table 2
Validity, reliability and normality measurement indices

Test	Measurement	Threshold value	Test value	Reference
Internal reliability	Cronbach alpha (α)	≥ 0.70	0.95	(Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978)
Normality	Skewness	$\pm 1.96, p < 0.05$	$-1.34, p < 0.05$	(Pallant, 2005)
	Kurtosis	$\pm 1.96, p < 0.05$	$1.42, p < 0.05$	
	KMO- value	$\geq 0.6, p < 0.05$	$0.712, p = .000$	

From Table 2 it has been found that all the measurement indices have values within the threshold range, showing that the instrument used is valid and reliable. Data were found normal and suitable for further analysis.

Level of Principal's Leadership Skills

Table 3
Percentage Distribution of Level of Principal's Leadership Skills (PLS) (N=408)

Variable/ Sub-dimensions	Level of Intellectual Capital		
	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Transformational leadership skills (TLS)	4.7	27.7	67.6
Organizational leadership skills (OLS)	4.9	27.9	67.2
Behavioral leadership skills (BLS)	4.9	21.6	73.5
Principal's leadership skills (PLS)	4.2	25.7	70.1



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Overall level of principal's leadership skills (PLS) shown in Table 3 which shows that majority (70%) of the teachers perceive that the Principals have an overall high level of leadership skills. The most prominent among them is the level of behavioral leadership skills (74%), followed by transformational leadership skills (68%) and organizational leadership skills (67%).

Table 4

Percentage Distribution of PLS Level by Gender Within the Pakistan Army (N=115)

Category	Gender	Variable/ Sub-dimensions	Level of Intellectual Capital		
			Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Pakistan Army	Male	Transformational leadership skills(TLS)	17.1	31.4	51.4
		Organizational leadership skills(OLS)	20	34.3	45.7
		Behvioural leadership skills(BLS)	22.9	34.3	42.9
		Principal's leadership skills(PLS)	20	31.4	48.6
	Female	Transformational leadership skills(TLS)	5	43.8	51.3
		Organizational leadership skills(OLS)	7.5	33.8	58.8
		Behavioural Leadership Skills(BLS)	2.5	25	72.5
		Principal's Leadership Skills(PLS)	3.8	38.8	57.5

Similarly, the perception of Federal Government school male teachers (81%), was that their principals possess overall high leadership skills; they also they claim that the behavioral leadership skills (78%) are most prominent followed by transformational leadership skills (76%) and organizational leadership skills (74%) as shown in Table 4.

Likewise 67% female teachers perceive that their principals possess high leadership skills. Moreover, 76% female teachers believe that their principals possess high transformational leadership skills, 63% female teachers believe that their principals possess high organizational leadership skills.



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Table 5

Percentage Distribution of PLS level According to Gender in the Federal Government (N=224)

Category	Gender	Variable/ Sub-dimensions	Level of Intellectual Capital		
			Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Federal Government	Male	Transformational leadership skills(TLS)	3.8	20.2	76
		Organizational leadership skills(OLS)	1	25	74
		Behavioural Leadership Skills(BLS)	3.8	18.3	77.9
		Principal's Leadership Skills(PLS)	2.9	16.3	80.8
	Female	Transformational leadership skills(TLS)	1.7	31.7	76
		Organizational leadership skills(OLS)	2.5	35	62.5
		Behavioural Leadership Skills(BLS)	2.5	24.2	73.3
		Principal's Leadership Skills(PLS)	8	32.5	66.7

The Fizaia schools teachers' response is shown in Table 5, which shows that 92% teachers perceive that their principals possess overall high leadership skills, while in fragment form 95% believe principals have high behavioural leadership skills, followed by transformational leadership skills (90%) and organizational leadership skills (90%).

Similarly, 77% of female teachers of Fizaia schools are satisfied with the overall high leadership skills possessed by their principals; further they perceive that their principals possess high organizational leadership skills, followed by transformational leadership skills and behavioral leadership skills. The percentage is shown in Table 5.



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Table 6
Percentage Distribution of Level of Principal's Leadership Skills in Fizaia Schools (N=69)

Category	Gender	Variable/ Sub-dimensions	Level of Intellectual Capital		
			Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Fizaia (Air Force)	Male	Transformational leadership skills(TLS)	5.3	5.3	89.5
		Organizational leadership skills(OLS)	5.3	5.3	89.5
		Behavioural Leadership Skills(BLS)	5.3	0	94.7
		Principal's Leadership Skills(PLS)	5.3	2.6	92.1
	Female	Transformational leadership skills(TLS)	3.2	19.4	77.4
		Organizational leadership skills(OLS)	3.2	16.1	80.6
		Behavioural Leadership Skills(BLS)	3.2	25.8	71.0
		Principal's Leadership Skills(PLS)	3.2	19.4	77.4

Results displayed in Table 6 indicate that a vast majority of male teachers (92%) of Fizaia schools perceived that their principals possess high level of leadership skills, while 2.6% male teachers believe that their principals possess moderate level of leadership skills and nearly 5.3 % teachers perceive that their principals have low level leadership skills.

Same Table 6 also highlights important results regarding level of leadership skills perceived by female teachers of Fizaia schools. Among them, 77% believe that their principals have high level of leadership skills, while 19% perceived that their principals possess moderate level of leadership skills and a mere 3.2 % indicate that their principals possess low level of leadership skills.



Table 7

The Effect of Gender (Sex) on Principals Leadership Skills

			Beta estimate	S.E	C.R	p-value	Result
PLS(LSK)	←	Sex	-0.084	.076	-1.109	.267	Insignificant

From Table 7, it is found that Sex has an insignificant effect on principal's leadership skills.

DISCUSSION

From the literature it is clear that leadership has an indirect role in student's achievements but it has a direct role in staff professional development. Results of this study reveal that overall there is a high level of leadership skills possessed by these leaders. Individual analysis shows that there is a difference in this level in these government and semi-government organization's schools. These results categorically expresses that principals working in Fizaia schools possessing high leadership skills as perceived by their male staff followed by principals working with Federal government male teachers and then considered by female teachers of Fizaia schools. The level of leadership skills shown by female teachers of federal government schools is not good, however; the worst situation was found in Pakistan Army schools. An astonishing situation was found from responses of male staff of Pakistan Army schools when they highlighted the low level of their principal's leadership skills (see Table 4). Leadership skills are necessary for the effective functioning of any organization as evident from literature. Nobody will accept principals unless they possess leadership skills. The only difference between effective and ineffective schools is the leadership skill of the school principals (Blackburn, 2009; Piaw et al., 2014). Leadership skills are also useful in human development since human development is possible when leaders use their skills to develop their human capital as well as social capital. This developed human capital is the vital factor for quality education.

Quality of education is possible through quality leadership and teachers (Peleg, 2012). Leaders will be considered of quality if they possess leadership skills. People who do not possess leadership skills will not be accepted as leaders by any group in any settings (Silva, 2014). Therefore currently we need such leaders who possess leadership knowledge, skills and analytical capability (Peleg, 2012). Results of the present study contradict the results in Alam (2012), Khan (2013) and Memon and Bana (2005). Results of this study are consistent with the results obtained by Akinola (2013) in Nigeria. Principals working in Nigeria were possessing high level of leadership skills but students results' were unsatisfactory. Student failure can be attributed to several factors, so the whole responsibility should not be put on leadership; leadership matters but it is not everything (Silva, 2014). From this study it is found that the principals working in Federal government schools, Pakistan Army schools and Fizaia schools possess leadership skills. The level of their skills is different possibly because of differences in structural capital (rules, norms, policies) of the organizations, or one organization may have more resources than others for staff development or leadership training. It is crystal clear that leadership skills are essential for staff development; once the employees are developed then organizations will be effective and will gain competitive advantage.



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CONCLUSION

Previous studies conducted either in rural areas, in primary schools and single sex based schools showed deficiency of leadership skills. The majority of schools in this study are co-education; the schools are situated both in urban and rural areas. In these schools researchers found that principals have the leadership skills. Level of leadership skills differ in these schools due to the difference in structural capital of the operating organizations. The level of leadership skills in Pakistan Army schools is low as compared with secondary schools due to the managerial role of the principals. The majority of the principals posted in Pakistan Army schools are retired from other cores and they do not possess qualities of educational leaders, although they do possess qualities of good administrators, so they follow hard and fast rules instead of listening to others. In contrast principals of Fizaia schools are mainly retired from the education core, therefore they take various aspects of the schools like sharing vision, involving teachers in decision making and so forth. While teachers posted in federal government schools are the promoted teachers from teaching cadre to the principal post. They have a rich teaching experience, they practice organizational citizenship behavior and they know that they will not succeed unless they involve teachers in school matters. They believe in team work and promote social capital inside and outside the school with the local community. Which is highlighted by teachers' perception? From these results it is found that in some schools there are administrators while in other types of schools there are educational leaders. Leadership and management are two different things but the existence of both is necessary in schools for effective functioning (Kotterman, 2006).

FUTURE RESEARCH

From literature we found that teachers in Pakistan are promoted from teacher post to the principal post without adequate knowledge of leadership skills. This is due to the deficiency of funds for leadership training. This study shows that principals working in these sample schools possess leadership skills. Future investigators should determine from where they obtained these skills. Further they can investigate that if these principals received training before joining their offices how much did such training affect the intellectual capital of these schools.

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