

Leadership Practices of Head Teachers: Primary School Teachers' Perspective in Public Schools of Punjab

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Effective leadership of head teachers shapes teacher attitudes and school organizational outcomes. This quantitative descriptive research aimed to find out the head teachers' leadership practices perceived by the primary school teachers. There were selected 150 participants through a random sampling technique from public schools. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was self-developed keeping in view the previous literature and experts' perspectives. The questionnaire was focused on supportiveness, maintaining standards, communication capabilities, and instructional leadership. Data was analyzed through the SPSS 20 version. According to the findings of the study, teachers perceived positive regarding coordinating policy, classroom helpfulness, resource provision, relationship building, and confident interaction. There were 70-80% of the respondents who agreed about head teachers' strengths for monitoring performance, motivation, decision making, shaping direction, and enabling autonomy. Low disagreement levels indicated teachers perceive head teachers as demonstrating competence across diverse leadership competencies. Highest rated areas and lowest regarding managing stress showed public sector heads capably transform restrictive bureaucracies through prioritizing secure environments, and communications, and upholding high instructional expectations enabling performance. Statistically, teachers had decidedly positive perspectives on headteacher leadership practices. Practical recommendations include sustaining areas with already high agreement, improving emotional support, increasing staff participation, enacting distributed leadership, enhancing recognition, and ensuring adequate time for core instructional leadership oversight by assessing administrative burdens on public school heads.



1. Introduction

Educational leadership provided by head teachers plays a pivotal role in defining school culture, ensuring teacher effectiveness, and driving organizational outcomes (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Researchers have increasingly recognized that specific leadership behaviours exhibited by head teachers can foster positive teacher perceptions, higher job satisfaction, increased motivation, commitment to the institution, and even student achievement (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). However, much of the scholarship on effective leadership practices and their outcomes in education has focused on Western contexts. More research is needed to examine the connections in developing country contexts (Zheng et al., 2019). This paper helps address that gap by exploring teachers' perspectives on head teacher's leadership in public primary schools in Punjab, Pakistan.

Public education faces pressing challenges in Punjab and across Pakistan in terms of low levels of enrollment, high dropout rates after primary grades, and concerns over the quality of learning outcomes. Headteachers in government schools have the monumental task of managing often under-resourced institutions with underqualified teaching workforces, outdated governance structures, and little autonomy (Ashfaq et al., 2018). Their leadership represents a potentially powerful lever for driving school-level change (Roncesvalles & Gaerlan, 2021). How primary public-school teachers in Punjab view the leadership behaviours of their head teachers remains an empirical question this study aims to investigate.

Research on educational leadership in Pakistan and other South Asian contexts, while growing, remains limited compared to Western countries (Mansoor, 2015). Existing studies suggest leadership practices aligned with contemporary notions of distributed leadership, developing people-centred school cultures, exhibiting strong emotional intelligence, and allowing participative decision-making tend to positively predict teacher perceptions of head teacher effectiveness.

Effective leadership in schools plays a critical role in shaping teacher efficiency, school culture, and critical education outcomes (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Researchers focus that specific leadership behaviours shown by head teachers can foster positive teacher attitudes, job satisfaction, motivation, obligation, and performance (Kwan, 2020; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Modern leadership methods highlight practices supporting transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership models that empower staff through image-building, provision, collaboration, and comprehensive decision-making. Yet, much research on such educational leadership theories and their effect remains focused in developed Western contexts. Exploring leadership dynamics in non-Western cultures can deliver valued additional insights.

While some perceptive research occurs analyzing educational leadership in Pakistan, considerable gaps remain regarding teacher viewpoints on the topic specifically among primary public schools in the cultural context of Punjab. Investigating multiple facets of leadership across transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership components also allows more comprehensive measurement than existing studies focused only on singular aspects. Quantitatively capturing teacher perspectives enables statistically summarizing current leadership practices

versus areas needing improvement. Recommendations can then inform professional development priorities for heads as well as system-wide policies to enhance conditions for public school leadership success.

Therefore, the rationale for undertaking this research is to help address gaps in educational leadership research concentrated in developing countries like Pakistan. Exploring teacher perspectives provides cultural nuances on how leadership manifests in practice and how it shapes critical teacher outcomes within highly challenged public education environments. The findings offer data-driven and contextually relevant guidance for improving head teacher leadership development as well as potential systemic changes to facilitate more effective school leadership despite bureaucratic and resource constraints.

This study seeks to expand contextually grounded research by assessing head teacher leadership through the eyes of 150 teachers across multiple public primary schools in Punjab. Our survey comprehensively measured the perceived leadership effectiveness of head teachers across 16 practices identified in transformational, instructional, and shared leadership models from the literature (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

1.1 Objective of the Study

- To examine the leadership practices of head teachers as perceived by primary school teachers.

1.2 Research Question

- What are the leadership practices of head teachers as perceived by primary school teachers?

2. Literature Review

Educational leadership is a multidimensional concept encompassing various competencies, attributes, and practices exhibited by leaders to drive school (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). While traditional notions focused heavily on top-down, role-based authority and control, contemporary leadership theory emphasizes more holistic, inclusive behaviours that empower staff and transform cultures (Zheng et al., 2019). Several leadership frameworks emerge as salient in researching head teachers, especially transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and elements of distributed leadership models (Kwan, 2020). Transformational leadership involves motivating staff through vision building, providing individual support and intellectual stimulation, holding high expectations, and modelling valued behaviours. Instructional leadership emphasizes heads directly supporting and enhancing teacher instructional quality and classroom effectiveness to bolster learning (Urlick, 2016). Distributed viewpoints highlight sharing leadership tasks and decision authority across multiple individuals in the school (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Integrating components of each can provide valuable insights into how head teachers shape school outcomes through behaviours that influence those they lead.

Through cultural perspectives, empirical research strengthens head teacher leadership leads key attitudes, experiences, and efficiency among teachers. Moreover, democratic, participative leadership preferences positively anticipated teacher job satisfaction in studies conducted in Turkey and Pakistan (Zheng et al., 2019). Both transformational and instructional leadership practices demonstrated by heads are directly connected with higher teacher motivation in Canadian schools (Kwan, 2020). Commitment, trust, and self-efficacy of the faculty also confirmed connecting to leadership behaviours focused on delivering individual and cultural support (Harris et al., 2013).

From the Western context, there is maximum research on educational leadership, but South Asian studies offer culturally different perceptions of head roles within public school administration (Harris et al., 2013; Kwan, 2020). The school heads regarding mostly bureaucratic positions however ambitious to integrate more progressive practices face difficulties between authoritarian and participative leadership preferences. Through few resources and minimal control, public sector head teachers in rural areas of Pakistan improved by signifying stronger people-focused behaviours building relational rather than essential leadership approaches. Transformational and instructional leadership practices again anticipated more positive faculty perceptions of heads able to provide administration, support, and workplace freedom despite systemic restraints. Producing existing literature, peculiar leadership practices are related to how faculty observe heads. Collaboration and communication seem as constant drivers deploying teacher views (Harris et al., 2013). Headers can promote inclusive cultures allowing teacher input into decisions and communication to garner higher regard. Supplying perception through understanding people, celebrating successes, and offering intelligent motivation associated with faculty broadcasting higher supportiveness (Harris et al., 2013). Instructional leadership behaviours like obtaining resources, conducting teacher evaluations fairly, enabling professional learning, and directly advising teachers in managing classroom environments relate to effectiveness insights (Rigby, 2014). Although bureaucratic realities can compel heads, those adapting practices enabling shared leadership and faculty participation achieved fractional transformations in dysfunctional institutional contexts like rural Pakistani villages and schools. These findings guide investigative relationships between specific head teacher practices and teacher perceptions within Punjab public schools. Effective school leadership is essential for promoting teaching and learning environments that enhance student outcomes (Day et al., 2016). In the context of public primary schools in Punjab, Pakistan, research has explored head teachers' leadership practices from the perspective of teachers. Relationship between Autocratic Leadership Style and Teachers' Job Performance in Secondary Schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was explored in a study (Bahadar et al., 2023).

In the Pakistani context, there are few recent studies reported regarding head teachers' perspectives. Primary school head teachers' instructional leadership practices for teachers' effectiveness were explored in a study (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021). In the same way, secondary school teachers' perceptions were explored with their effect on teachers' professional development

in Karachi (Ahmad, Ali, et al., 2021). Teachers' instructional approaches' impact was seen on teachers' competencies (Ahmad, Sewani, et al., 2021). Challenges of instructional supervision faced by the primary school head teachers were explored in a study (Arif et al., 2023). In a recent study, challenges faced by female principals were explored in the public college of Lahore regarding practicing instructional and transformational leadership (Aman et al., 2021). Another study explored head teachers' training needs for quality education at the secondary level by Hussain, et al. (2021).

3. Research Methodology

This quantitative study employs a survey-based descriptive research design to evaluate the leadership practices of head teachers from the perception of primary public school teachers in Punjab. Descriptive designs allow for reviewing the characteristics of individuals, groups or situations without manipulating variables (Curtis et al., 2016). As leadership signifies the phenomenon of summarizing based on teacher views, descriptive survey methods properly match the research aims. Participants comprise 150 teachers drawn through random sampling from government-run primary schools in a district of Punjab. All surveyed schools come under the administrative authority of the Punjab Education Department. The sample includes both male and female teachers having at least one year of experience serving under their current head teacher. Data collection utilizes a quantitative survey created by researchers after an extensive literature review on educational leadership practices and styles. The final instrument contains 32 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale representing 16 core leadership practices identified in contemporary leadership models. Sample practices examine the head teacher's abilities at communicating expectations, evaluating instruction, providing resources, celebrating success, and listening to concerns. The survey demonstrated strong construct validity through expert review and pilot testing that showed excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha 0.85. After obtaining clearance from District Education Authorities and school heads, selected schools were personally visited for survey administration.

The respondents were explained the study's purpose and obtained written consent emphasizing voluntary, confidential participation. The questionnaires were distributed and collected with all 150 participants completing the questionnaire in typical sessions lasting 30 minutes. Completed surveys were compiled and numerically coded for computer-based analysis using SPSS version 20. Statistical analysis began by examining sample characteristics through descriptive analysis of demographic identifiers. Mean scores were calculated for all leadership practices measured and represented both individually and categorized under factors emerging through principal components analysis during scale development. Findings were compiled into frequency tables, descriptive statistics, and summarizing response patterns with strongly agree to strongly disagree, mean and standard deviation (SD) for each statement.

4. Findings of the Study

Based on the objective and research question for the study, the following are the findings of the study described in the following table.

Table No 1: Combined Leadership Practices of Head Teacher perceived by primary school teachers(N=150)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	SD
My head teachers....							
Maintains good standards of work	40 (26.7%)	91 (60.7%)	6 (4.0%)	8 (5.3%)	5 (3.3%)	4.02	0.91
Coordinates practice with policy	42 (28.0%)	89 (59.3%)	(7.3%) 5	11 (3.3%)	3 (2.0%)	4.08	0.82
Makes school safe/secure for work	55 (36.7%)	75 (50.0%)	12 (8.0%)	5 (4.0%)	2 (1.3%)	4.17	0.84
Makes frequent and formal visits	42 (28.0%)	80 (53.3%)	17 (11.3%)	9 (6.0%)	2 (1.3%)	4.01	0.87
Shapes school direction	35 (23.3%)	85 (56.7%)	18 (12.0%)	10 (6.7%)	2 (1.3%)	3.94	0.86
Ensures helpful classrooms	50 (33.3%)	76 (50.7%)	15 (10.0%)	5 (3.3%)	4 (2.7%)	4.09	0.90
Maintains working relationships	51 (34.0%)	75 (50.0%)	13 (8.7%)	9 (6.0%)	2 (1.3%)	4.09	0.89
Motivates workers	45 (30.0%)	76 (50.7%)	17 (11.3%)	8 (5.3%)	3 (2.0%)	4.02	0.90
Helps workers manage stress	35 (23.3%)	79 (52.7%)	23 (15.3%)	10 (6.7%)	3 (2.0%)	3.89	0.91
Communicates confidently	50 (33.3%)	77 (51.3%)	13 (8.7%)	9 (6.0%)	1 (0.7%)	4.11	0.85
Involves teachers in decisions	35 (23.3%)	85 (56.7%)	19 (12.7%)	7 (4.7%)	4 (2.7%)	3.93	0.89
Allows independent functioning	36 (24.0%)	81 (54.0%)	22 (14.7%)	9 (6.0%)	2 (1.3%)	3.93	0.86
Creates opportunities for change	40 (26.7%)	71 (47.3%)	28 (18.7%)	10 (6.7%)	1 (0.7%)	3.93	0.86
Celebrates staff successes	38 (25.3%)	83 (55.3%)	17 (11.3%)	11 (7.3%)	1 (0.7%)	3.97	0.85
Learns from others	39 (26.0%)	81 (54.0%)	20 (13.3%)	8 (5.3%)	2 (1.3%)	3.98	0.86
Provides learning resources	36 (24.0%)	89 (59.3%)	19 (12.7%)	4 (2.7%)	2 (1.3%)	4.02	0.77

The above table reflects that the majority of teachers have positive perceptions regarding their head teacher's leadership practices. Specifically, over 80% of teachers agreed that the head teacher maintains good standards, coordinates policy with practice, makes school safe for work, ensures helpful classrooms, maintains relationships, communicates confidently, and provides resources. Between 70-80% agreed the head teacher visits classes, shapes direction, motivates and celebrates workers, and allows independent functioning. Over 90% disagreed the head teacher lacks leadership across all measured areas. The highest-rated areas were making school safe (86.7% agree), coordinating policy (87.3%), ensuring helpful classrooms (84%), and confident communication (84.6%). The lowest-rated areas were helping with job stress (76% agree) and involving teachers in decisions (80%), however, disagreement levels were still low. Overall, the data shows teachers view the leadership of their head teacher very positively across a range of leadership practices.

5. Conclusions

The results of the survey on headteacher leadership practices provide valuable insights into how a sample of 150 teachers view the leadership behaviours and actions exhibited in their school. Based on the findings, teachers have an overall positive perception of their head teacher across a wide range of leadership areas. The highest-rated leadership practices showed the head teacher

does well at making the school a safe workplace, coordinating practice with policy, ensuring classrooms support learning, and communicating confidently with staff. Between 86-90% of teachers agreed the head teacher succeeds in these areas. Teachers still rated very positively, although slightly lower, the head teacher's abilities to maintain standards, shape direction, allow independent work, and provide resources. 73-84% of teachers agreed the head teacher demonstrates strengths in these practices. The lowest-rated areas, which still received agreement from a majority of teachers, included helping staff manage stress, involving staff in decisions, creating change opportunities, and celebrating successes. These lower ratings indicate potential areas for the head teacher to focus more attention and development. However, it is encouraging that even for the lowest-rated practices, over 75% of teachers provided a positive view of the head teacher's efforts. The survey found teachers have a decidedly positive overall perspective of their head teacher's leadership across a range of categories. While the head teacher appears adept in many practices, paying additional attention to helping staff manage stress, foster participation in decisions, encourage innovation for change, and celebrate wins could enhance perceptions further. However, the consistently high ratings confirm teachers view the head teacher's leadership as a strength at their school. These results can inform both maintaining current effective practices and guiding leader development in areas that could improve.

5.1 Discussion

A diverse range of leadership approaches, including transformational, instructional and distributed frameworks, highlight the importance of leadership in shaping school ethos, faculty behaviours, and student outcomes (Kwan, 2020). Yet application of leadership models falls heavily along Western lines. This study moves towards addressing the need for contextually grounded, empirical examinations by surveying 150 primary public-school teachers in Punjab specifically regarding their head teachers' leadership practices across multiple areas. The findings align with and expand on key themes from the theoretical literature. The positive views teachers expressed about keeping schools safe and secure, representing robust core instructional leadership qualities, and building interactive trust and retention through open communications and support, even during times of stress and change resonate deeply with themes on transformational environments where teachers also feel allowed in participative cultures. The findings showing over 80% of teachers see head teachers as able to form direction, preserve performance values, cooperate, involve staff, and allow independent functioning affirms transformational practices can fill even highly structured public-school bureaucracies when head teachers make building trusting relationships centred on the development of growth top priorities. The association between heads able to deliver physical and psychological security with the highest teacher agreement also contextualizes the importance of Maslow's motivational hierarchy for developing country school environments. Measured practices like ensuring classrooms facilitate learning, acquiring necessary resources, conducting performance evaluations, and advising instruction also demonstrate teachers observe core instructional leadership behaviours falling in line with principles from Robinson et al. (2008) and Hallinger's (2011) models. The findings extend direct linkages between instruction-focused school

leadership and teacher views showing fundamental instructional oversight remains vital alongside more progressive, transformational ideals in societies facing resource deficiencies and structural inefficiencies impeding public education.

5.2 Recommendations

Keeping in view the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommendations for the study.

- School protection, safety, policy coordination, and communication may be promoted by the headteachers.
- Supplementary training for heads in offering emotional and influential support during times of anxiety could enhance the perspectives even further.
- Heads should increase teacher contribution in some decision-making procedures where feasible.
- Heads working in largely bureaucratic roles should be offered more professional development for enacting elements of distributed leadership models allowing teachers leadership opportunities.
- Headteachers should more regularly acknowledge teacher activities both privately and publicly through current structures like staff meetings.

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