



School Leadership and Management Practices for Enhancing Student Learning, Staff Development, and Resource Effectiveness

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Abstract: Effective school leadership is vital in enhancing education outcomes. It affects student learning, teacher development, and management of resources. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of school leadership and management methods in improving students' learning, skills development, classroom engagement, staff development, and resource effectiveness in public schools of South Punjab, Pakistan. A qualitative research design was used in the study, and 30 school heads were purposively selected and interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Data were processed using NVivo 14 and a thematic analysis approach to uncover major themes of leadership. The findings demonstrated that effective leadership promotes students' learning through quality teaching, teamwork, and supportive learning environments. Further, leadership supports teacher development through mentoring, feedback, and professional support. Furthermore, careful use of resources improves teachers' performance and school development. The study concludes that educational improvement depends on the development of effective leadership practices.

Key Words: School Leadership, Student Learning, Teacher Development, Resource Management

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Effective school leadership is one of the variables that can improve the quality of education by influencing teaching, school culture, and learning environments (Ashu, 2014). Teachers are the ones immediately participating in the

classroom instruction. However, school leaders define the vision, provide professional support, foster collaboration, and obtain resources needed for effective teaching and learning (Anjum & Zafar 2022). Furthermore, research indicates that leadership improves students' performance indirectly through higher teacher motivation, instructional practices, and organizational effectiveness (Cheng, 2022). In the context of Punjab, Pakistan, effective school leadership has become more important because of the persistent problems connected to learning quality, educational inequities, and school administration (Baron et al., 2023). The province has improved access to education, but better enrollment has not fully translated into better learning outcomes. "Learning poverty is still a big concern for Pakistan, and there is a need for more robust leadership at the school level to improve educational efficiency," states the World Bank (Naz et al., 2023). School leaders are key to implementing educational policies that lead to changes in the classroom through instructional leadership, teacher support, and effective decision-making (Clinciu, 2023).

Effective leadership fosters teacher development, team collaboration, commitment, and general well-being. As Ventista and Brown (2023) note, continuous learning opportunities, feedback, and mentoring all help improve the quality of teaching and increase the motivation of staff members. In the same manner, the strategic use of human resources, financial resources, and technology helps schools create a conducive learning environment and ensure they improve sustainably (Riaz et al., 2018; Clinciu, 2023). Therefore, to resolve the educational challenges, it is necessary to utilize leadership approaches that include instructional enhancement, staff empowerment, and resource effectiveness.

But hardly any studies have been conducted on the role of these interrelated characteristics of leadership in public schools of South Punjab. Furthermore, the research explores ways of school leadership and management with special attention to three crucial areas: learning and engagement of students in the classroom; support for staff development and well-being; and improving teacher performance through the best possible use of resources. The study explores these factors in combination to provide context-specific insights into the influence of school leadership on educational improvement in Punjab, Pakistan.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In Punjab, Pakistan, despite reforms and greater access to schooling, difficulties relating to student learning outcomes, teacher development, and effective school management continue to exist. School leadership has been identified as a determinant in boosting instructional quality, staff collaboration, and resource management. Nevertheless, little research has been done on the joint impact of these practices on school effectiveness in South Punjab. However, there remains limited understanding of how school leaders facilitate students' skill development, improve teacher effectiveness, support staff well-being, and leverage available resources. Therefore, this study fills this gap by exploring the importance of school leadership and management methods in increasing student learning, staff development, and resource effectiveness in public schools of South Punjab, Pakistan.

1.3 Research Objectives

- 1 To explore how school leadership and management affect students' learning, skills development, engagement in class, and teachers' performance.
- 2 To investigate the contribution of school leadership to staff professional development, cooperation, dedication, staff well-being, and the efficient utilization of the school resources.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is that it provides insight into how school leadership and management approaches result in improved student learning, teaching, and resource utilization. The findings could also serve as a roadmap for educational authorities and school leaders to know what to replicate to build strategies for effective leadership, professional development, and resource management. Further, it adds to the literature on public schools in South Punjab by demonstrating the importance of leadership tactics in terms of enhancing classroom engagement, collaboration among teachers, and improvement of schools. Thus, the research can contribute to reinforcing educational policies and supporting permanent improvements in school performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 School Leadership and Student Learning Outcomes

Leadership is increasingly considered a significant element of the quality of education and the accomplishment of children. The effective school leader has a clear vision for learning and a clear direction for the academic activities

of the school and creates the organizational conditions that enable teachers to deliver effective teaching (Kyereh, 2023). While instructors have a direct impact on classroom learning, leadership has an indirect influence on students' learning outcomes by affecting instructional practices, school culture, and professional support networks (Masnawati & Darmawan, 2022). In addition, instructional leadership such as monitoring, feedback, and evidence-based decision-making can improve students' achievement through better teaching (Mughal et al., 2023).

Moreover, the school leaders are supportive of the development of students' talents; they promote student-centered learning techniques, collaborative learning activities, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Xhomara, 2022). This practice can be utilized to develop academic and transferable abilities needed for lifelong learning. These leadership practices are of specific significance to the educational context of Punjab, Pakistan. The problem of access is not unique, as the quality of learning and child achievement are also important factors in the education sector (Xhomara, 2022). Barón et al. (2023) point out that Pakistan needs to focus on strengthening school-level leadership for better learning outcomes, for example, by mentioning learning poverty. Therefore, the role of a competent leader is important in implementing the policy changes in the classroom.

2.2 School Leadership, Teacher Development, and Staff Well-being

It is evident that school leaders influence teachers' professional progress, teamwork, engagement, and general well-being (Naz et al, 2023), as they have a vital role in improving student accomplishment. Effective leaders create opportunities for ongoing learning, such as training, mentorship, coaching, and critical feedback. Continuous professional learning is more likely to lead to high-quality teaching and learning than isolated training activities (Ventista and Brown, 2023). Additionally, they can adopt improved practices to enhance their professional confidence by observing, sharing, and working with colleagues with the teachers' direction (Masnawati & Darmawan, 2022).

Furthermore, the supportive leadership style can help them to encourage staff commitment and well-being by creating a positive organizational culture and atmosphere of trust, recognition, and involvement (Naz et al., 2023). One of the strategies was to involve teachers in decision-making and provide professional support that would inspire them and hold them accountable for improving the school (Aulia & Haerani, 2022). The school leaders play an important role in offering opportunities for teachers to collaborate and exchange experiences, problems, and solutions and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

2.3 School Leadership, Management, and Resource Effectiveness

Strategic management of learning resources is also a requirement for effective leadership in schools. For instance, effective resource management comprises the management of human resources, educational materials, technology, buildings, and funds (Bhutto & Zafar, 2023). School leaders are expected to make the best use of the available resources to meet the educational goals and to use them effectively to improve teaching and learning. Resource management is not just about availability but also about planning, allocation, monitoring, and utilization (Naz et al., 2023). Additionally, the deficiencies in educational management systems, coordination, and resource allocation continue to affect the effectiveness of education (Naz et al., 2023). Moreover, effective management is linked to decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning based on data to respond to the issues that schools are facing (Shonubi, 2012). School administrators can leverage the resources to implement sustainable improvement plans effectively through proper communication and collaboration with teachers, parents, and communities (Naz et al., 2023). "School leadership and administration directly related to how well schools can improve teacher performance and student outcomes.

2.4 Leadership and School Improvement in Punjab, Pakistan

This makes the role of school leadership more important in light of the varying levels of educational achievement, resources, and administration problems in different districts of Punjab. But this upward movement in the number of children in Punjab accessing education has not translated into learning results (Ventista & Brown, 2023). Therefore, there is a need to strengthen leadership capacity in the local schools so that they can be supported to address their local concerns and to improve the quality of education. The current education reforms in the Punjab also suggest that the development of school leadership, support to teachers, improvement in administrative processes, and community engagement are all critical areas that need to be further developed for the school system to move forward (Robinson et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the literature review indicated that leadership goes beyond administering but also involves enhancing

training, empowering employees, and allocating resources judiciously. However, researchers have found very little work on the interaction of these elements in the public schools of South Punjab. The current study tries to contribute to the existing literature by assessing the impact of school leadership and management practices on student learning, staff development, and resource effectiveness as perceived by school heads.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the role of school leadership and management practices in improving educational outcomes in Punjab, Pakistan. A qualitative approach was selected to understand participants' experiences and perceptions regarding leadership influence on students' learning, skills development, classroom engagement, teacher performance, staff development, collaboration, well-being, and resource utilisation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect detailed responses related to the research questions. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes related to effective school leadership and management practices.

3.2 Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in three districts of South Punjab, Pakistan, namely Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Rahim Yar Khan. The districts were chosen because they tend to have higher levels of educational disparity and administrative issues compared to central Punjab. The study also focused on public schools to examine the differences in leadership styles, staff assistance, and resource distribution of different educational environments.

Furthermore, 30 school heads were purposively sampled and participated in the study. The choice of this sampling strategy was based on the fact that principals had direct leadership responsibilities, practical experience, and relevant understanding of school management and improvement practices. Attempts were also made to incorporate a range of participants in terms of gender, urban/rural settings, and size of school. This diversity helped, therefore, to embrace a larger spectrum of views on school leadership and management approaches.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method since this approach gave flexibility to allow participants to describe their experiences in detail. Secondly, it enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions when necessary to acquire greater insights into school leadership and management methods. The interview questions were crafted in line with the research aims and consisted of three major themes: the role of school leadership in enhancing students' learning, skill development, and engagement in class; how school leaders supported staff professional development, collaboration, commitment, and well-being; and how leadership and administration led to the improvement of student learning, teacher performance, and efficient resource use.

Moreover, the interviews were conducted for about 20-30 minutes, and participants were allowed to respond in either English or Urdu as per their comfort and choice. Audio recordings were also collected with the prior consent of participants for accuracy and reliability. All recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim to allow for systematic thematic analysis to identify significant patterns related to effective school leadership strategies.

3.4 Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews and field notes were systematically structured and analyzed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 14. The data were analyzed using the six steps of thematic analysis as described by Naeem et al. (2023): familiarization with the data, first coding, identification of themes, assessment of themes, definition and naming of themes, and preparation of the final report. NVivo's visualization capabilities (such as word clouds, tree maps, etc.) helped to identify patterns, connections, and associations between key themes emerging from the interviews. Examining and interpreting the problems related to stress was based on research objectives, and it is meaningful to my research with regard to the practices in school leadership and management. Themes were analyzed and interpreted to provide meaningful insights that are congruent with the research goals and to deepen the knowledge of school leadership and management strategies.

4. Data Analysis

Q.No.1 What is the role of school leadership in student learning, skill development, and engagement in the classroom?

student-centered techniques that allow learners to build the abilities they will need beyond the academic information. School administrators also support teachers by giving direction, feedback, and professional development opportunities that enhance quality of instruction and teacher effectiveness in the schools. Leaders also help identify pupils' needs and strategies for encouraging engagement and confidence by ensuring that the learning outcomes are assessed effectively and continually monitored. So, a competent school leader provides a favorable learning environment, which leads to better student engagement, better learning outcomes, and better higher-order skills.

Q.No.2 How are school leaders supporting staff professional development, collaboration, commitment, and well-being



Figure 3. Word cloud of the Support for Staff Professional Development, Collaboration, Commitment, and Well-being

School leaders matter in fostering staff professional development, teamwork, commitment, and well-being. Effective leaders first provide opportunities for continuous learning – professional development, knowledge sharing, mentoring, and reflection – for teachers and staff. They also provide positive feedback and guidance on ways for growth in the teacher's professional development, confidence, and practice of teaching. Furthermore, the school leaders promote cooperative work by establishing a healthy school culture that enables teachers to exchange ideas, cooperate, and contribute to the school's progress. Moreover, fostering trust, dedication, and motivation requires appreciating the role of staff, speaking with them, and involving teachers in decision-making. Hence, successful leadership methods create a positive culture in the school and make the workers more satisfied and responsible for its success.

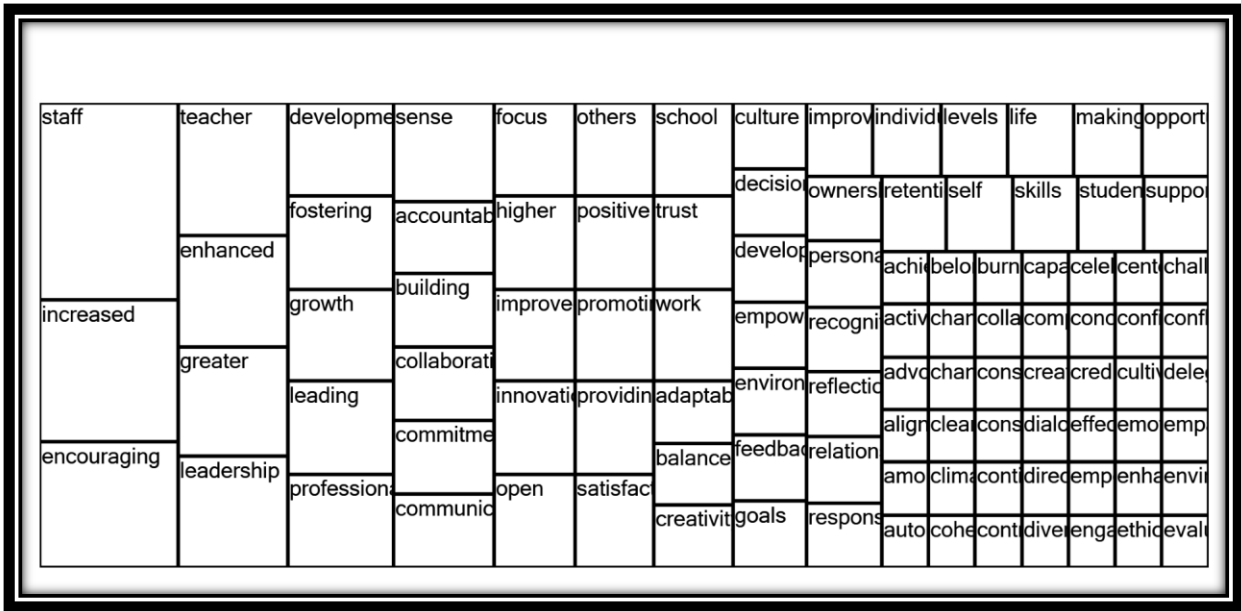


Figure 4. Tree map of the Support for Staff Professional Development, Collaboration, Commitment, and Well-being

The work climate within the school is positive and supportive and demonstrates professional development, collaboration, commitment, and the well-being of staff. Teachers' CPD is supported effectively by leaders in a variety of ways, such as mentoring, feedback, reflective practice, and training, making teachers more skilled and confident. In addition, they promote collaboration through developing trust and open communication and working together as a team, encouraging staff to collaborate and 'work smarter' to enhance the school.

Likewise, the school leadership takes cognizance of and rewards staff work, motivates them, and seeks their opinion in decision-making processes, which improves their levels of commitment, motivation, and professional responsibility. Leaders' attention to staff well-being and ensuring a balance of work and challenge in supportive communication also leads to higher levels of satisfaction and relationships amongst staff. So, effective leadership promotes teachers' learning, collaboration, and commitment to the school and fosters and maintains a positive culture of the school that supports improvement.

Q.No.3 How can school leadership and administration increase the learning of students, the performance of teachers, and the effective use of school resources?



Figure 5. Word cloud of the Improving Student Learning, Teacher Performance, and Resource Effectiveness through School Leadership

School leadership and administration are crucial to improving learning, teacher performance, and the effective use of school resources. They also create a learning environment that fosters kids’ learning and involvement. School leaders establish clear goals and supportive norms for students. They supervise teachers, provide feedback comments, and provide teacher training to improve teaching quality and classroom effectiveness. Effective leadership also implies that all the resources that the school has are planned for and used efficiently, such as teaching and learning materials, technology, financial resources, and human resources. In addition, teachers’ cooperation, innovation, and the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making can help overcome hurdles and strengthen school reform efforts. Therefore, effective school leadership and management have a significant impact on student achievement, teacher performance, and sustainable use of school resources.

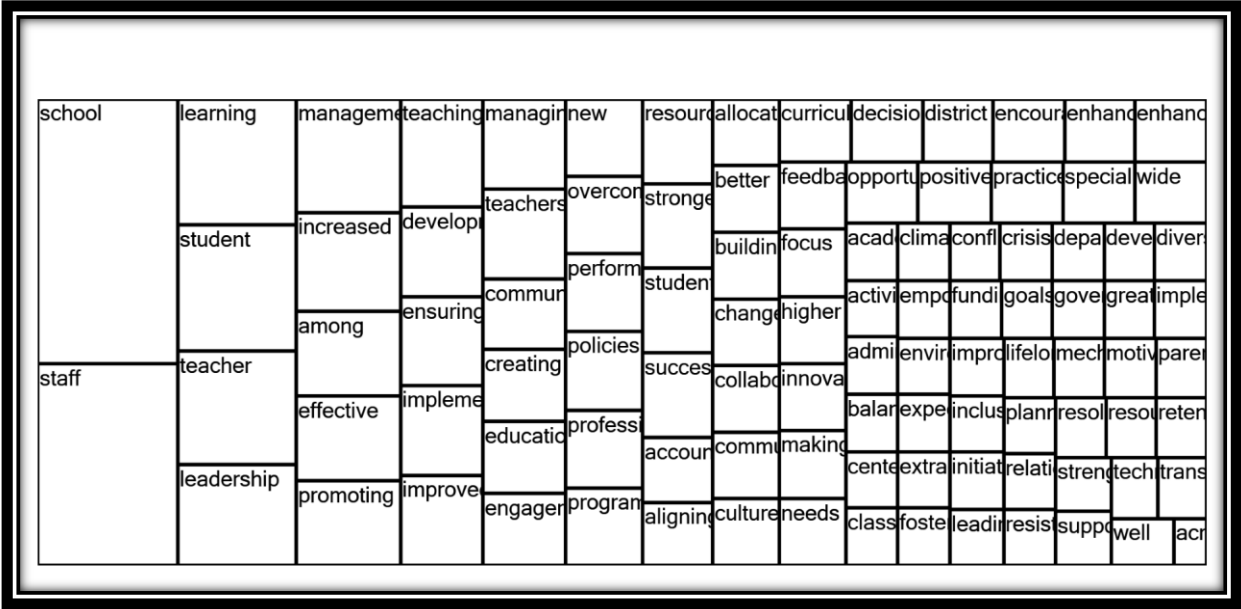


Figure 6. Tree map of the Improving Student Learning, Teacher Performance, and Resource Effectiveness through School Leadership

The leadership and administration have a significant role in enhancing student learning, staff effectiveness, and resource management. An effective leader has clear objectives and effective approaches to teaching and learning and is developing an appropriate school culture that supports child achievement and engagement. Furthermore, they enable teachers to work together, enhance curriculum development, and analyze the results of assessments to determine gaps in learning and classroom performance. School leaders also boost the performance of teachers by providing professional assistance, advice, and opportunities for continuing development. Moreover, the proper use of the resources of the school (human, physical, material, and information and communication technology) guarantees that the available resources are used to support the educational priorities. Effective leaders may resolve challenges and ensure a school continues to expand by planning, talking to, and working with stakeholders. The effective leadership and management of the school, therefore, have a favorable influence on learning outcomes, teachers' performance, and the effectiveness of the school's use of resources.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that the leadership of the school is a critical component in enhancing educational outcomes. One is effective leadership that ensures provision for students' learning through the promotion of excellent teaching, pupils' learning, critical thinking, skill development, and participation in class. In addition, supportive management promotes the professional growth of employees through training, teamwork, feedback, and recognition. This in turn leads to higher levels of staff engagement, motivation, and well-being. Effective leadership and management also ensure that proper planning, resource utilization, communication, and school improvement are carried out to ensure the effective use of teachers and resources. Successful leadership has a positive impact on the culture of the school, the engagement of the personnel, and the useful learning of students. Furthermore, effective governance can enable schools to be flexible and capable of coping with the challenges they are facing. It is therefore essential to build effective and empowering school leadership to enable schools to achieve sustained improvements in the quality of learning, staff performance, and school performance.

6. Discussion

First, leaders enhance student accomplishment by providing high-quality teaching, learning through investigation, thoughtful involvement, and student-driven learning. The results are in line with the findings of Naz et al. (2023), who stated that leadership influences students' achievement through its reflection in teaching practices, school culture, and teacher support. Mughal et al. (2023) also found out that the practices of instructional leadership improve the efficiency of teaching and learning outcomes.

The research further indicates that supportive leadership can promote teachers' professional growth, collaboration, motivation, and well-being through mentoring, feedback, and acknowledgment. This is in agreement with the proposal of Ventista and Brown (2023), who underlined the necessity of continual professional development in order to improve both teaching and learning.

Other variables that contribute to long-term improvement of educational institutions are the effective use of resources, strategic planning, and efficient communication. This finding is congruent with the findings of Robinson et al. (2007), who highlighted the significance of efficient utilization and management of resources. Therefore, there is a need to train and support school leaders for the betterment of education quality, teachers' performance, and school effectiveness.

6 Recommendations

1. Leadership development programs for schools should be implemented to enhance the capacity of school heads to be instructional leaders, strategic planners, decision makers, and effective resource managers.
2. Teachers should be provided with ongoing professional development through training, mentoring, collaboration with peers, and feedback to support their professional development and teaching quality.
3. Schools should foster a culture of teacher participation, open communication, recognition, and strategies that enhance teacher motivation and well-being.
4. There is a need to strengthen effective resource management strategies for sustainable school improvement so that human, financial, technological, and educational resources will be used efficiently.

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