

Relationship between Strategic Leadership Styles of Head Teachers and School Performance at Secondary Level: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract

This research paper aimed to find out the relationship of strategic leadership styles of head-teachers and school performance at secondary level. A cross-sectional correlational research method was employed. All the head-teachers of secondary schools in Tehsil Sargodha were considered population for this study. By using cluster sampling technique, data was collected from all the 171 secondary schools head-teachers. Strategic Leadership Styles Questionnaire by Gaylord Reagan (1998) was adopted to collect the data from head-teachers. According to this scale, there are eight leadership styles which sums up to make strategic leadership style of heads. The instrument was based on Thurstone scale ranging from 1-8 (least to most). A positive, weak but significant correlation found between strategic leadership styles of head teacher and school performance. However, regression analysis indicated that strategic leadership style of head teachers effects the school performance to some extent. It is recommended that faculty having experience in educational administration may provide comprehensive and specific instructions for putting strategic leadership techniques into practice so to increase school performance.

Keywords: *strategic leadership, school performance, head teachers, secondary level, correlation*

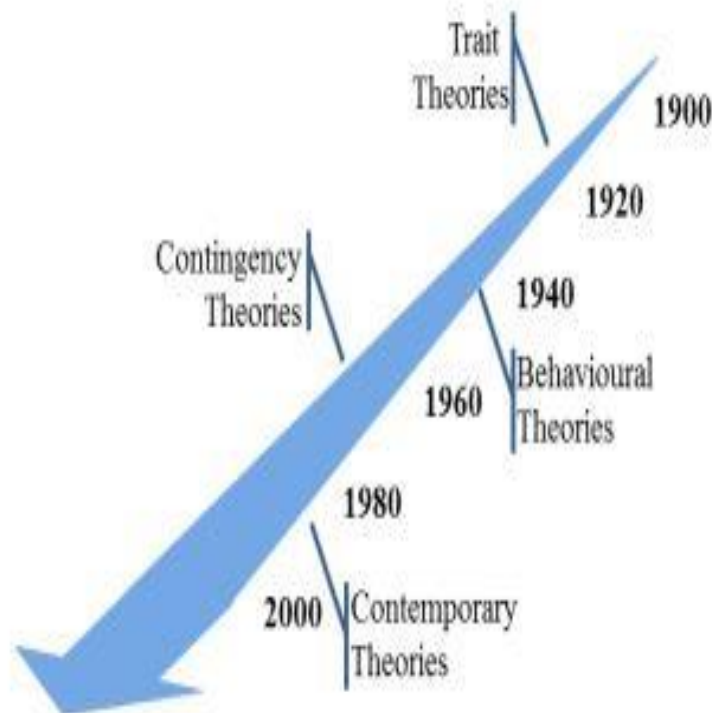
1. Introduction

Complex educational environment of twenty-first century is expecting the successful performance of organizations (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018). This demand has further laid their hopes on the top leaders and their leadership capabilities for producing desirable results (Aquino et al., 2021). Indeed, organizational outcomes reflect the characteristics of their top executives or the persons in leading positions. A plethora of studies have shown that “top executive’s background, past experiences, personality, and values can influence the strategic decision making” in an organization (Singh et al., 2023. p.2). Administrators of successful schools dedicate a significant amount of time to plan and overseeing instructions to improve the productivity of the schools (Simmons & Taylor, 2019). According to Jabeen and Ch (2021) school heads are considered accountable for improving the school culture which further leads to improvement in school performance. In this context, Mulford (2003) highlighted that “school improvement movement from the past 20 years has put a great emphasis on the role of leaders” (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001b,

p. 32). Fullen (2002) argued that in current scenarios of high expectations only “Effective school leaders are key to large-scale, sustainable educational reforms” (p.15). Leadership and leadership styles played an essential role in building a conducive working environment and culture within the organizations. Particularly the leadership style of organization’s heads inspires their employees to struggle hard to achieve the vision and goals (Sarwar et al., 2022).

Before discussing the strategic leadership, it is useful to highlight evolution of leadership theories. However, there are many leadership styles are discussed under the contemporaneity theories which includes authentic, charismatic, spiritual, transnational and strategic leadership. This research focused on the exploring the importance of strategic leadership and its relationship with school performance.

Figure 1. *Evolution of Leadership theories proposed by Redmond, 2016*



Explaining the importance of strategic leadership, Davies and Davies (2004) argued that strategic leaders facilitate their peers to use different opportunities to adapt and respond to organizational uncertainty. Strategic leadership is considered as critical component for organizational development (Carvalho et al.,2021). In pursuit of high performance, strategic leaders are attributed to create a sense of purpose, direction during interaction with internal and external stakeholders (House & Aditya, 1997). According to Glantz (2002), theory of Strategic leadership implied that strategic leaders have the strategic thinking ability, which helped the organization with a competitive advantage in the disruptive schools' environment. It further includes the imagining, anticipating, maintaining flexibility and mobilizing different human and monetary resources for productivity. More specifically, strategic leadership (SL) has been explained by many scholars (Ireland & Hitt, 1999; Hagen et al.,1998) to have core critical practices which are essential for the performance and stability of organizations in uncertain environments. These practices are as follows: i) developing a sustainable organizational culture; ii) emphasizing ethical values; iii) managing the human and social assets; iv) exploring and explaining the organization's core capabilities and v) determining the long term goals of the organizations. In Pakistani context, the school leaders have ultimate authority to use many resources and develop strategies to improve performance of schools. Thus, make them responsible and accountable in their role as leaders.

1.1 Objectives and the Hypothesis of the Study

Following were the objectives of this study.

(a). Find out the relationship between strategic leadership styles of head -teachers and schools performance; (b). find out the effect of strategic leadership styles of head-teachers on schools' performance. Whereas, the hypothesis of this research are i.e. (a). H_{01} - There is no significant relationship between the command, collaboration and disintegration styles of strategic leadership styles and school performance (b). H_{02} - There is no significant effect of command, collaboration and disintegration styles of strategic leadership on school performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing the Strategic Leadership

According to the Singh et al. (2023) that strategic leadership gained significant attention in the literature after the upper echelon theory into the management literature by Hambrick and Mason (1984). The idea of strategy first appeared in the literature of management in the 1980s, but only a few researches were conducted till 1990s (cf. Eacott, 2008b). A detailed framework for strategically oriented schools was established by Davies and his colleagues which consisted of strategic processes, methods, and leadership strategies (Davies & Davies, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2010). Carvalho et al. (2021) asserts that a strategic leader must possess a variety of important qualities such as vision and strategic setting, the ability to put plans into reality, the capacity to develop work successfully, attention to detail, and the capacity to evaluate strategy on the whole. Davies and Davies (2004) further

highlighted that different terms have been used in literature for strategic leadership characteristics as core competencies (Pralhad & Hame, 1990) and strategic capabilities (Stalk et al., 1992). Hoskisson et al. (2004) identified few activities that effective strategic leaders and top management teams must focus on to contribute to the performance of the organization. These activities are interlinked and overlapping to maximize the productivity of the organization. These activities are as follows:

Figure 2. Flow chart of strategic actions as proposed by Hoskisson et al., (2004)



Explaining the similar notion, Guillot (2003) explained that strategic leadership is attributed to formulate plans and then carry them out in order to make important decisions in a complicated and ambiguous working environment. Their study further explored that strategic leadership has three major sub-types as Command, Collaboration and Disintegration and all these are helpful in improving the school performance independently (Njukunye & Waithaka, 2020). Hence, Strategic leadership also demands to have the ability to make decisions and to value them with the support of

the faculty or staff (Carr et al., 2009). Wotton (2010) stated that to achieve the strategic leadership based administration, the most essential factor is the knowledge and strategic thinking. Chatchawaphun et al. (2016) have highlighted the characteristics of strategic leadership style in detail. These includes the knowledge, principles, skills which are required to develop respectable administrative culture, long-term planning, expansive vision, and the ability to carry out tasks in order to meet organizational and societal expectations. Many researchers focused on investigating the strategic leadership styles with other key variables i.e. culture of teaching (Khumalo, 2019), collaboration (Ismail et al., 2018), school effectiveness (Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2017) and organizational learning (Aydin et al., 2015).

2.2 Strategic leadership and organization performance

Asif and Basit (2021) described the indicators to recognize the strategic leaders. They explained that these leaders have the ability to envision the future and set the long term goals for their team and organization. Several studies have affirmed that leadership styles have a direct relationship with performance if implement strategically. It is one of the most important attribute that influence the people to transform their working behaviors to make organization successful. According to Northouse (2004) the process of influencing the group of people who strive for a common goal is known as Leadership. Only a strategic leader leads the organization to produce a high-industrious performance for the organization. Besides, Ivancevich et al. (2008) explained that only strategic leadership role of heads is critical for the effective and productive organization. Not only strategic leadership is regarded as one of the most important variables influencing employees' inspiration and organizational change, but also it has been identified as an important element of innovation and productivity for organization (Sarwar et al., 2022).

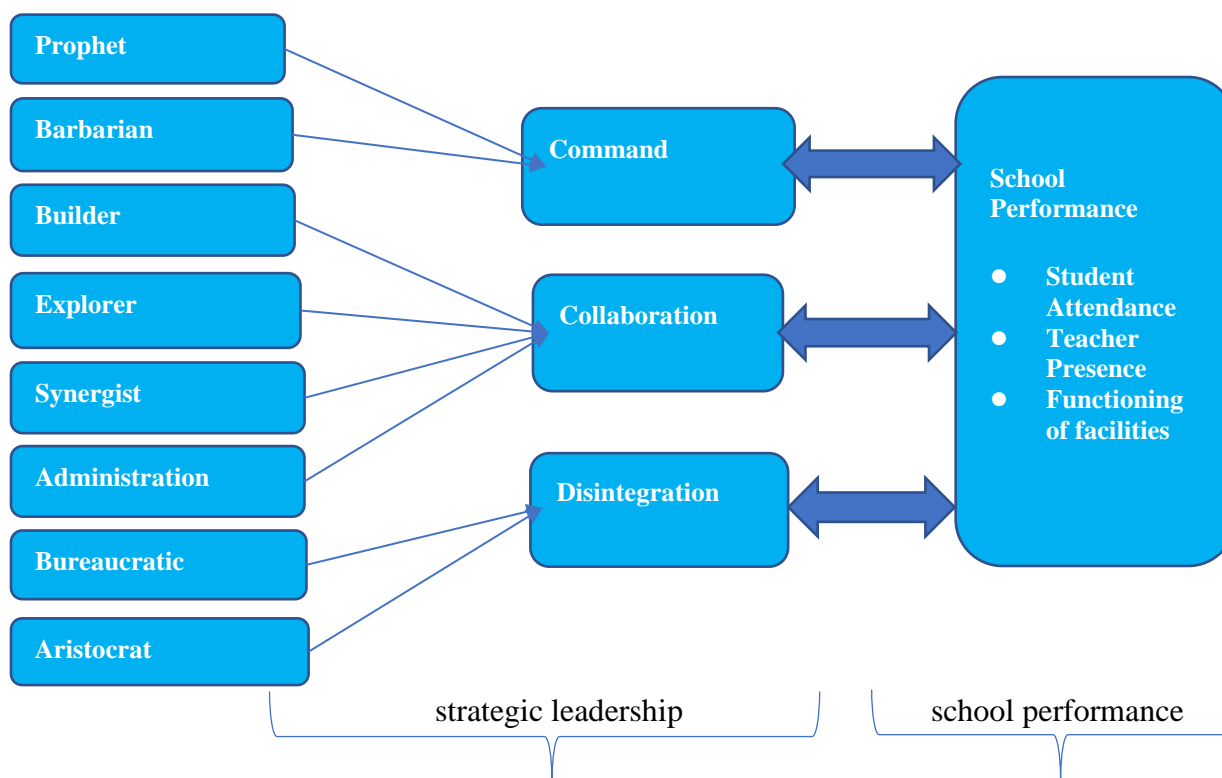
Performance of an organization considered as an indicator of achievement and reflects the success of its leadership behaviors. Moreover, the organizational performance also mirrors the dynamics of organizational life cycle (Carmeli et.al., 2009). Leadership styles always helps to strengthen the intra-organizational relationships which is a necessary drive of employee creativity and effectiveness in long run (Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, over the last two decades, the key focus for those who led have been school effectiveness and performance (Davies & Davies, 2004). Leaders needs to be act strategically to achieve the organizational targets efficiently and effectively (Deeboonmee, 2013). Most of the theoretical work on strategy leadership is related to management and organizational settings and there is still very limited researches are dedicated to these issues in educational setting (Carvalho et al., 2021). The current study helped the researchers to understand the importance of strategic leadership styles for school performance. Jaleha and Machuki (2018) reported that many conceptual and empirical studies have witnessed that strategic leadership has significantly influenced on the organizational performance (Quigley & Graffin, 2017; Ireland and Hitt, 1999). However, Morales et al. (2008) pointed out that there are also substantial studies available which seek to find out direct and indirect path relationship between strategic leadership and performance but failed to

do so due to unidentified situational factors including confounding and intermediate variables (Knies et al., 2016). Thus this paper seeks to fill the research gap by discussing the empirical evidence and aimed to find out the relationship between strategic leadership styles of heads on schools performance in Pakistani context.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Following conceptual framework was used to find out the relationship between variables.

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework of the Study



3. Methodology

Correlational research method was used to find out the relationship between strategic leadership styles of head teachers and school performance at secondary level. For this purpose, all the heads, working at the secondary schools in Tehsil Sargodha was considered population for this study. There are 171 secondary schools in this Tehsil. So by employing cluster sampling technique, data was collected from all the head teachers. However, only 58% participants returned the questionnaire.

3.1 Instruments

To find out if head teachers were using strategic leadership styles or not, Strategic Leadership Styles Instrument by Gaylord Reagan (1998) was adopted to collect the data. According to this scale, there are eight leadership styles which sums up to make strategic leadership style of heads. The instrument was based on Thurstone scale ranging from 1-8 (least accurate to you and your behaviour to the most). There were total 40 statements divided into three factors command, collaboration and disintegration. These three factors further divided into five groups of sub-factors. The second variable of the study was school performance. School performance was limited to only three indicators i.e. student attendance, teacher presence and functioning of facilities available at school and school performance data was taken in percentages from the website of Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU). https://open.punjab.gov.pk/schools/home/districts_performance/.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

All head teachers were gathered at “Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED/GCET) Sargodha” for 8-days training on School Leadership Development Programme of Head teachers. Data was collected during training session in person.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze the data. Result of analysis has been explained as findings.

4. Results, Findings and Discussion

The findings of the current study were as follows:

TABLE 1. Mean of the factors of strategic leaderships style

Variable	Mean
Command	4.54
Collaboration	4.73
Disintegration	3.96
Strategic Leadership Style	4.41

It is inferred from the table that collaboration has highest mean (4.73), followed by command (4.54) and disintegration (3.96).

Hypotheses

H0₁. There is no relationship between the command, collaboration and disintegration styles of strategic leadership and school performance

TABLE 2. Correlation between Strategic Leadership styles and School Performance (N=100)

Variable	Mean	r	Sig.
Command	4.54	.277**	.005
Collaboration	4.73	-.246*	.014
Disintegration	3.96	-.015	.885
Strategic Leadership Styles	4.41	.199*	.047

**p < .001 (2-tailed), *p < .005 (2-tailed)

It is noted that there is a positive and weak correlation ($r = .277, p = .005$) found between command and school performance and there is negative and weak correlation ($r = -.246, p = .014$) found between collaboration and school performance. Also, negatively insignificant correlation ($r = -.015, p = .885$) found between disintegration and school performance. Furthermore, positive correlation ($r = .199, p = .047$) found between overall strategic leadership styles and school performance.

H0₂. There is no significant effect of command, collaboration and disintegration styles of strategic leadership on performance of school.

TABLE 3. Strategic Leadership Styles and School Performance (N=100)

Variable	B	β_1	R ²	df	F	Sig
Constant	93.04	.277	.07	99	8.157	.005
Command	.557					
Constant	99.59	-.246	.06		6.323	.014
Collaboration	-.85					
Constant	86.80	.199	.04		4.035	.047
Strategic Leadership Styles	1.98					

Table III. explained that command style of strategic leadership predicts the significant amount of variance in the school performance as $F(1, 98) = 8.157, p = .005, R^2 = .07$. The regression coefficient ($\beta_1 = .277$) indicated that any slight change in command style of strategic leadership may predict the changes in school performance. The collaboration style of strategic leadership predicts the significant amount of variance in the school performance as $F(1, 98) = 6.323, p = .014, R^2 = .06$. The regression coefficient ($\beta_1 = -.246$) indicated that any slight change in collaboration style of strategic leadership

may predict the inverse changes in school performance. Therefore, strategic leadership styles predict the significant amount of variance in the school performance as $F(1, 98) = 4.035$, $p = .047$, $R^2 = .04$. The regression coefficient ($\beta_1 = .199$) showed that any slight variation in strategic leadership styles may predict the changes in school performance.

This study investigated the relationship between head-teachers' strategic leadership styles with school performance. For this study, positive, significant but weak correlation found between strategic leadership styles of heads with school performance. Findings of this study are aligned with study of Bett and Bett (2021) as they found significant effect of strategic leadership on school performance. Furthermore, Jabeen and Ch (2021) found weak but significant relationship between leadership competencies and school performance. Quigley and Graffin (2017) supported the aforementioned findings that strategic leadership has a significant impact on organizational performance. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers and scholars to identify those key behaviors of leaders which leads to improved performance of organizations (Mutia, 2015; Jansen et al., 2009; Joste & Fourie, 2009). Moreover, emphasizing the similar notion, Crossland and Hambrick (2011) said that top leadership roles have sufficient effect on their organizational performance through their strategic choices.

5. Conclusion

This study concluded that school heads need to be aware of their strategic leadership styles so they may practice them to improve the school performance. Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that strategic leadership style of head teachers affects the school performance to some extent.

6. Future Recommendations

As school leaders have significant importance in improving the performance of their schools, so seminars and dialogues may be organized to enhance the importance of strategic leadership styles of heads. Practical activities may be conducted for head teachers to increase the use of strategic leadership styles through workshops in real context. Furthermore, staff having experience in educational administration may provide comprehensive and specific instructions for putting strategic leadership techniques into practice so to increase school performance.

As this study was conducted in one district only, similar research on different samples and across diverse population may be needed to determine how strategic leadership styles would affect school performance with respect to gender and experience of teachers. Furthermore, researchers may use other research methods such as case study, experimental to explore variables of this study.

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