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Relationships between Principal Leadership Style, School Climate, and Teacher Stress

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Abstract- In this study the relationships between transformational leadership style, school climate and teacher stress were investigated. Data were collected from 15 schools principals and teachers with grade configuration of six through ten in district Karak KP. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to analyze the relationship between leadership style and school climate, school climate and teacher stress, and leadership style and teacher stress. Result showed that transformational leadership style positively influenced the school climate. In positive school climate the stress level in teachers remained normal. The correlation between leadership style and teacher stress was also not significant; meaning that transformational leadership style minimized teacher stress level.

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I. Introduction

Principal is considered as the most influential person in the school organization. The school name and fame is thought to be very closely linked with the principal's behavior inside the school. He has important role in the school effectiveness and running it efficiently (Sabriah, et al. 2010). The school environment and feelings of teachers inside the organization revolve round the leadership style of the principal. All these have close relationship among them and influence each other. Collectively they create an atmosphere that affects the ultimate purpose of the organization, i.e. students' performance.

Basically three leadership styles are identified; authoritarian, democratic and laize-faire. Each style has specific characteristics and influences the school environment. But policy makers and educators think about such effective leadership that can improve the school and provide continuous teacher commitment towards his job (lambertze, 2002). Bass (1990) also favours such leadership style that encourages teacher commitment for achieving the organizational goals. The success and failure of any educational institution can be attributed to a great extent to the leadership of the principal of that institution. The leadership style of the principal affects in positive or negative way the whole environment of the school. In the words of Deal and Peterson(1999) principals are the living 'Logos' because their actions and words give message to others what is valued in the school setting. He/she leads from his/her values. School activities are determined by what the principal does. Principal influences others' behaviors'. His/ her values are contagious, his good sense of ethics instills respect and trust in the whole system, communicate a clear message about the important things and the way how to operate the school. According to Ramzay (1999) in school students and teachers try to live according to the standards of the head of the institution. Therefore, the head should accept the responsibility, what the staff and students say and do that create the school climate to facilitate effective teaching learning process.

For performing their duties smoothly, the principal's leadership behavior is crucial. The principal's role/style affects the whole educative environment and decreasing /increasing teacher stress and their professional practices are affected which ultimately influence the students' academic performance. We see the difference in students' performance studying in public /private schools. The difference leads us to analyze the role of the principal and investigate which style of the principal is perceived by teachers as the better one and which behavior of the principal makes them stressful. The role of teachers in creating positive school climate cannot be denied. Teachers' satisfaction and their working in stress free environment are crucial for positive school climate. According to Hoy and Miskel (2001) school climate is the sum total of beliefs, values and attitudes of pupils and staff members including principal and parents, leadership style and job satisfaction. In other words, it is the atmosphere which is influenced by the head of the school that dictates students and teachers' perception of their school and affects their values and attitudes towards school and job. Researches on school climate, e.g. Hoy and Sabo (1998) show that positive school climate is related to the effectiveness of the whole school. Although leadership style is the major cause involved in school climate, however many opinions favour students and school community perceptions as important components for a good climate in the school.

In west for about two decades' leadership of the school principal has been considered as the crucial component of the school (Murphy, 2005). In Pakistan the idea of principal as leader is yet a new concept but it is being realized as an important aspect of the role of principal. It is important determinant in creating effective learning environment and a principal's success in school

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achievement goals. Leaders should be well aware of the necessary conditions and processes of school improvement. According to Kelly, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) "skilled leaders precisely envision future needs and empower others to share others and implement that vision. School principals must be able to assess and evaluate the impact and perceptions of their leadership styles." In the rapidly changing circumstances a dynamic leadership of the principal is must for bringing reforms in the school. Principal must deal with the leadership building capacity of his staff. To meet the present day challenges, the old concept of a strong principal who maintained only discipline and record keeping has changed to that of instructional leader and transformational leader with vision and captain of a team to bring reformation in his institution.

II. Influence of Principal on School Climate

Principals use the information's related to school such as students' test scores, attitudes, teachers' politics, their academic and professional standards, and their general behavior with the students and their attitude towards job. All these factors compose the school climate. Keeping in view all this information the principal decides the school planning. The instructional activities going in school should be well understood by the principal for bringing any change in the school climate. Leadership affects the school and is the fundamental component in achieving the school objectives.

According to Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) leadership of the principal is associated with school climate. While Bulach, Boothe & Pickett (2006) consider principal leadership as an indicator of school climate.

Many aspects are included in school climate e.g. the physical and psychological environment of the school, leadership qualities of the staff and school staff relations with the community.

Effective leadership fosters positive school climate. So we cannot deny that principal's leadership is linked to school climate as indicated by(Sims, 2005).

III. School Climate and Teacher Stress

Organizational climate in the school influence the behavior of the school and it depends upon the overall perceptions of the teachers. As the school climate is the combination of the relationships among all the personnel in the school, i.e. principal, teachers, students and other staff members. The sum total of the nature of these relationships establish the school climate and create positive or negative atmosphere. Teachers as part of the whole environment influence the climate and are being influenced. When the teachers' relationships are strong within the organization and positive climate exists in the school, teachers feel free and are not stressed but when their relationship become weak they become non cooperative and their stress level arise (Beehr,1995). Establishing positive school climate is the main responsibility of the school principal that enhance the teachers' morale and performance (Freiberg, & Stein 1999).

IV. Principal Leadership and Teacher Stress

The term stress is not something new in our daily life. Everyone feels some kind of stress when he faces some abnormal situation. Occupational stress is a worldwide problem. Teacher stress is one of them. Although it is a psychological phenomenon but it has a strong influence on the physiological environment of the school also and a stressful environment can never lead to positive school climate that foster congenial educative process and better performance of the students.

Many factors are involved in teacher stress but inside the school the leadership of the principal is more involved. Principal as authority in the school can do much to minimize teacher stress by adopting suitable leadership style according to the situation. All over the world teacher stress has become major area of research for educationists and policy makers. Now it has been accepted that teacher stress is one of the causes that brings hurdles in the achievement of quality education. A dissatisfied and stressed teacher cannot teach as good as a teacher in free and healthy environment. Thus stress affects teachers' performance which after all affects students' performance.

It is very clear that all the factors are interrelated with one another, among which the leadership style of the principal has a major role.

In the context of Pakistan little attention is given to the effects that the behavior of the principal has on the different components of the educational environment. Principals make efforts to maintain the school environment peaceful from outside, make the teachers attend the classes and keep in control the students. What the teacher feel? , what happen in the class? , what do the students achieve? , the principal is not too much concerned with it. He feels success if little complaints of discipline are made to him. This situation is not optimistic. It is necessary to make realized the principals about their role and its effects. For this purpose, conducting of surveys are important at different levels of education to bring into the notice of principals and other stakeholders in a reliable way the relationships among the leadership style of principal, teacher stress, and school climate. This may enable the principals to rethink about their behavior while chairing the institution.

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a) Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship among the transformational leadership style of the principal, school climate and teacher stress. Answers were sought for the following research questions; (i) if leadership style influenced school climate, (ii) if the school climate affected teacher stress level and (iii) if leadership style affected teacher stress level.

V. Method of Research

a) Instruments

The principal leadership style was measured through PLQ (principal leadership questionnaire) having six subscales, (i) vision identification; when the principal identifies new opportunities for schools and with the future vision he inspires others, (ii) goal acceptance; the promotion of cooperation among the subordinates for achievement of goals, (iii) modeling; when the principal shows himself as role model, (iv) individualized support;; when individuals are respected and supported, (v) intellectual stimulation; when individuals are encouraged to rethink over their assumptions and performance, (vi) high performance expectation; expectations of the principal from his subordinates for high performance. All subscales have average Cronbach alpha above .80 (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996).

School climate data were collected through SCI-R (school climate inventory Revised) by CREP (center for research in educational policy, 2002). This instrument has seven subscales measuring order, leader, environment, involvement, instruction, expectation and collaboration factors of school climate. The instrument has been used in many studies. Its reliability is above acceptable criterion.70.

The third instrument WSPT9Wilson Stress Profile for Teachers) was used for collecting data of teacher stress. Ithas nine subscales measuring self-perceived stress in major stressful categories related to teaching and also provides an overall general teaching stress scores(Wilson, 1979). Perkey et al. (1988) have used this profile and found satisfactory result.

This study includes 15 secondary school principals and 75 teachers (five teachers in each school). In each school the principal responded to the PLQ(principal leadership questionnaire) and the five teachers expressed their opinion about the statements in SCI-R(school climate Inventory) and WSPT(Wilson stress profile for teachers). The relationship was examined between principal leadership style and the teachers' views about school climate and teachers level of stress. Relationships were examined between six factors of transformational leadership style of the principal, seven factors of school climate and nine factors of WSPT.

b) Results of the study

For determining relationships between the different variables Pearson product-moment correlation formula was used. Total observations are 15— the number of schools in the study. Table 1shows the relationships between six PLQ factors and seven factors of SCI-R

Table 1: Correlation between the PLQ factors (vision identification, modeling, goal acceptance, individualized support, intellectual stimulation and high performance expectation) and SCI-R factors (order, leader, environment, involvement, instruction, expectation, collaboration)

	order	Leader	Environment	involvement	instruction	expectation	Collaboration
Vision identify Cation	.477**	.212	.364**	.158	.228*	.365**	.185
Modeling	.303**	.012	.306**	.106	.132	.215	.167
Goal acceptance	.411**	.184	.257*	.132	.102	.237*	.252*
Individualized support	.365**	.137	.290*	.116	.097	.203	.206
Intellectual stimulation	.435**	.193	.335**	.191	.246*	.282*	.314**
High performance expectation	.440**	.200	.343**	.128	.145	.196	.233*

* P < .05
**P<.01

Significant positive relationships were found between all PLQ factors and order factor of SCI-R. it means that transformational behavior is directly linked with order in school climate. Similarly positive significant relationships were obvious with the environment of school climate. The three factors of SCI-R (instruction, expectation, collaboration) showed SCI-R(leader, involvement) showed no significant relationships with PLQ factors. However, the whole correlations are in positive direction which make it clear that transformational leadership style of the principal influences the school climate.

Table 2 represents correlations between SCI-R factors and WSPT factors. Here the result is mixed.

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Bothe positive and negative relationships are present but not significant. It shows that school climate affected teacher stress level both positively and negatively but not to a great extent.

Table 2: Correlation between SCI-R factors order, leader, environment, involvement, instruction, expectation, collaboration) and WSPT factors(students behavior, employee administrator relationship, teacher- teacher relationship, parent teacher relationship, time management, intra personal conflict, physical symptom of stress, psycho emotional symptoms of stress, stress management techniques)

	SB	EAR	TTR	PTR	TM	Int.P	PHSS	PES	SMT
Order	.210	.109	.032	.183	.188	.274*	.265*	.115	.095
Leader	.043	-.158	-.100	-.113	-.040	.028	.069	-.017	-.033
Environment	.126	.024	.084	.018	.111	.110	.241*	.093	.004
Involvement	.163	.057	.066	-.037	.145	.011	.231*	.262*	.032
Instruction	.031	.077	-.072	-.020	.045	.165	.039	.116	-.002
Expectation	.164	.079	-.012	.075	.141	.189	.206	.112	.068
collaboration	.076	.016	.042	.003	.150	.098	.140	.049	.023

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

In table 3 the result of correlation between PLQ factors and WSPT factors are shown. It is visible from the table that only Parent teacher relationship has significant correlation with the 'vision', 'modelling' and 'goal acceptance' factors of the PLQ ($p < 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between the other factors of PLQ and WSPT. It means that the respondent teachers stress level was not affected by the principal leadership style to a significant level.

Table 3: Correlation between the PLQ factors(vision identification, modeling, goal acceptance, individualized support, intellectual stimulation and high performance expectation) and WSPT factors(students behavior (SB), employee administrator relationship (EAR), teacher- teacher relationship (TTR), parent teacher relationship (PTR), time management (TM), intra personal conflict (Int P), physical symptom of stress (PHSS), psycho emotional symptoms of stress (PES), stress management techniques (SMT).

	SB	EAR	TTR	PTR	TM	Int.P	PHSS	PES	SMT
Vision identification	.179	.180	.117	.275*	.162	.175	.069	-007	.036
Modeling	.150	.112	.153	.277*	.174	.170	.163	.032	.099
Goal acceptance	.106	.146	.200	.270*	.139	.107	.066	-.012	.044
Individualized support	.004	-.028	.050	.192	.038	.054	-.008	-.040	-.148
Intellectual stimulation	-.031	-.024	-.033	.129	.096	.154	.031	-.023	-.055
High performance expectation	-.058	-0124	-.018	.140	..033	.050	-.018	.000	-.110

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

c) Limitations of the study

Data were collected from small numbers of principals and teachers and the schools were from rural area which could have brought skewness to the findings.

VI. Discussions

Although two factors (order, environment) of school climate have positive significant relationships with all factors of transformational leadership style yet the other factors of SCI-R do not show such relationship, e.g. Leader and involvement factors does not show any significant relationship and the remaining three factors (instruction, expectation, collaboration) have weak relationship with the leadership style. It seems that the different aspects of school climate are not influenced in the same way by the leadership styles of the principal. However, the correlations with all factors of leadership style goes in positive direction which indicates that transformational leadership style has positive influence on school climate.

As for as the relationship between school climate and teacher stress is concerned the positive school climate should reduce teacher stress. the result of table 2 is clear the correlation does not rise to significant level. It means that teacher stress level is not high because the leadership style of the principal has made the school climate a positive that can reduce teacher stress. the negative correlation of some factors, e.g. leader climate seems specific and unique characteristic of the environment as a whole in the school which needs further study.

The third correlation between leadership style and teacher stress is also in line with the correlation between school climate and teacher stress. When leadership style positively influences the school climate and the climate does not raise the stress level in teacher, the leadership style of the principal also minimizes teacher stress. Table 3 is evidence of the fact. However some negative correlations of the individual factors of the two variables, although not significant, require deep study.

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