

Transactional Leadership Behaviors of Principals and the Academic Achievement of High & Low Achieving Public and Private Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between transactional leadership behaviors of school principals and their academic achievement of high and low achieving secondary schools of District Lahore of Punjab Pakistan. Transactional leadership behaviors were analyzed among 235 (72 public school + 163 private) principals and 2350 teachers (10 teachers randomly selected from each school) of private and public secondary schools using the subscales of transactional leadership behaviors and the three outcome factors of transactional leadership (extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction) as the subscales of MLQ for data collection. Three years' external results of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) were taken as the academic achievement of the high and low achieving schools. The schools' principals were selected through purposive sampling on the basis of CGPA's of secondary schools announced by the BISE. The study found no significant relationship between transactional leadership behaviors and schools' academic achievement, but the outcome factors of transactional leadership behaviors e.g.; teachers' extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction were found positively correlated with schools' academic achievement. The private secondary schools of Lahore were found high achieving schools in comparison to public secondary schools. The limitations of the study, as well as the recommendations for future research, were also discussed.

Keywords: Transactional leadership behaviors, Contingent reward, Management by exception active, Public & private school, High & low achieving schools.

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Introduction

Leadership styles contribute to the success of any organization (Al Khajeh, 2018) to achieve performance targets (Mitonga-Monga & Hlongwane, 2017). Schools' academic achievement is seen through students' success and several researchers have argued that this can be increased by improving school leadership. School leader (principal) who is assumed to promote the culture and strengthens the climate of school that is directly associated with students' success (Barnett & McCormick, 2004) to increase schools' academic achievement.

Although several factors are associated with schools' academic achievement like school climate, teachers' attitude and teaching styles, and students' attitude and learning styles, the most important factor which directly affects all these factors is the leadership style of the school principal. Different leadership styles had been explored in the context of schools' academic achievement e.g; Mirsultan & Marimuthu, (2021) found significant and positive relationships between transactional and transformational leadership styles, teachers' job satisfaction and schools' academic achievement. Moreover, in a meta-analytical study conducted in the Turkish context found laissez-faire, transactional, instructional, and transformational leadership styles positively associated with schools' academic achievement (Ertem, 2021). Contrary findings are available on the effectiveness of transactional leadership styles in different country contexts (Maheshwari, 2021).

It was reported by ProPakistani, (2018) that "Pakistan's educational sector has always been under crisis since the beginning. Public expenditure on education as a percentage to GDP was estimated at 2.2 percent in fiscal year 2017 as compared to 2.3 percent of GDP in fiscal year 2016, which was the lowest in the region". Which is becoming one of the major factors of a declining education system and can be improved only by a right leadership (Mansoor, 2015). Therefore, it is the need of the hour to identify which leadership style can transform this deteriorated system.

Many studies are available on the positive and negative relationship of various leadership styles in terms of diverse school components in Pakistan but very limited research is available on the comparison between high and low achieving schools. The current research is initiated to deep dig this area to improve the schools' academic achievement in the context of Pakistan where schools' academic performance is not sustainable both in public and private secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were developed for this study

1. To see the relationship between principals' transactional leadership behaviors and their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.

2. To find the difference between the public and private principals' transactional leadership behaviors and their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.
3. To explore the difference of transactional leadership behaviors their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction in high and low achieving secondary schools.
4. To assess the significant difference, exist between the mean scores of public and private secondary schools' academic achievement.

Transactional Leadership Behaviors and Schools' Academic Achievement

Since the last three decades several leadership styles have been tested in terms of its effect on schools' academic achievement with contrary findings. Some studies reported small but significant effects (Uysal & Sarier, 2018) while others were found as insignificant. A study conducted in Kenya by Namirembe (2005) shared that many secondary schools could not perform academically well, not because of insufficient funds or resources but ineffective leadership styles. Few studies have reported direct and some shared indirect effect of school leaders on schools' academic achievement. Although in the education sector principal leadership seems to be moderately effective, still there is not sufficient evidence available to say which leadership model is more effective in improving students' academic achievement (Wu & Shen, 2022).

Seeing the contradictory findings in different countries, the current study focuses the Pakistan's secondary school education sector for transactional leadership style to see its effectiveness for schools' academic achievement. Leadership is described as an influence relationship between leader and followers and transactional leader influences the followers by motivation, and giving them the directions and targets (Aziz, 2013). They also provide multiple positive feedbacks; praises, material rewards, and sometimes by giving negative feedback in form of reprimands and warnings (Odumeru, Ogbonna, & Ogbonna, 2013). Moreover, he tries to achieve the targets by offering incentives, salaries, bonuses, and allowances for the completion of some specific task (Hargis & Bradley III, 2011) and to optimize their work efficiencies by identifying the needs of the subordinates and associating them with their performance. So, concluding that transactional leaders are observed to motivate the followers by giving reward and punishment in exchange of their performance (Changar & Atan, 2021). Transactional leadership was first introduced by Burn in 1978 exchanges between leaders and their followers consisted of two behaviors; contingent reward and management by exception (Hilton, Arkorful, & Martins, 2021). Bass (1988) divided management by exception in two dimensions; management by exception active and management by exception passive (Hilton et al., 2021). The effectiveness of transactional leadership style is still under research with contradictory findings (Pieterse, van Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam, 2010).

Contingent Reward

The contingent reward is found as a transactional leaders' strategy to improve employees' motivation (Puni, Mohammed, & Asamoah, 2018) and performance. Contingent reward behavior of a leader is reported as one of the significant factors in improving organizational performance (Hilton et al., 2021). To improve the performance of the employees, transactional leaders correlate incentives with performance and hold rewards for not fulfilling the required level of performance. Transactional leaders' conditions reward with the performance of the followers by identifying their needs (Conger, 1999), and in this way he keeps the followers motivated to increase the outcome and productivity of the organization.

Management by Exception Active

The second behavior of transactional leadership is management by exception active. A transactional leader expresses the behavior of management by exception active when he consistently monitors the employees and mediates to solve the problem that arises (Hoxha, 2019). The best presentation of this trait of transactional leadership is seen when leaders try to safeguard the status quo by ignoring the required improvements and focusing on the implementation of plans in conventional and managerial ways.

Management by Exception Passive

A transactional leader with the behavior of passive management by exception monitors employees when they do not meet the required targets or assigned tasks. They demonstrate least interest in the performance of the employees and only intervene with negative feedback (Hoxha, 2019). Such a type of leadership is ineffective and reduces the employees' performance (Hasson, von Thiele Schwarz, & Tafvelin, 2020) also often leads towards counterproductive results and anarchy in the organization. They not only affect the performance of their employees but the whole process of progression of the organization can also suffer. In an educational setting where meeting the pace of change is a great demand such type of leadership trait can affect in a negative way.

Contrary studies are available on the effectiveness of both the dimensions of transactional leadership styles. Raveendran, (2021) found contingent reward and management by exception passive as ineffective and management by exception active more effective for improving employee's performance. In management by exception passive behavior the transactional leaders intervene only when standards are not being followed and targets are not being achieved (Adeel, Khan, Zafar, & Rizvi, 2018) and he usually observed waiting for the mistakes to correct. How these behaviors of transactional leaders are associated with the employee's performance at secondary school level in Pakistan is scarcely researched.

Transactional leaders achieve the targets by following the existing structures and policies without bringing change in the organization or culture (Rautiola, 2009). Research supports that school leadership does not impact students' achievement directly but by increasing teachers' effectiveness, effort, and satisfaction (J. A. Ross & Gray, 2006). The transactional leader believes in stability and smooth functioning of the system, and he always prefers stability and seems to be the strong promoter of conditioning theories of Skinner and Pavlov. They also seem to be familiar with Maslow's Theory of Human Needs. Therefore, the success of the transactional leader depends upon the right identification of the needs of the followers. Research validates that school leadership does not impact students' achievement directly but by increasing the efforts and effectiveness and motivation of the teachers (Rautiola, 2009) and the transactional leaders are observed more effective to improve the professional capacities, capabilities of the teacher and effective in offering them contingent incentives to achieve the required level of performance (Waldman, Bass, & Yammarino, 1990). The effectiveness of the leadership styles in terms of schools' academic achievement is yet to be explored because the leadership practices and their effectiveness varies from culture and the country's context.

Teachers' Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction

An effective school leader can transform the teachers into professional, motivated, directed and hardworking followers to achieve the targets in the form of students' achievement. In this way a school leader can affect the students' achievement if he is positively perceived by his/her teachers (Biggerstaff, 2012). Rathi, Soomro, Rehman, & Innovation (2021) found that transactional leaders motivate the followers to achieve the high target by increasing their efforts and commitment.

Studies found a positive correlation between a leader's effectiveness, staff job satisfaction, and extra effort (Alloubani, Abdelhafiz, Abughalyun, Edris, & Almkhtar, 2015). Transactional leadership behaviors were found more effective for organizational performance (Longe, 2014) while some other studies reported contrary findings. Ample research is available on multiple leadership styles and their effectiveness but how these leadership styles influence employee's extra effort, effectiveness to improve their performance is under research. This study has taken extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction as the outcome variables of transactional leadership assuming if there is no direct influence of leadership behaviors on schools' academic performance then how it can affect the underlying factors or outcome. As few researches supported that school leadership does not impact students' achievement directly but by increasing teachers' effectiveness, effort and satisfaction (J. A. Ross, & Gray, P., 2006).

Schools Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is described as an academic outcome that shows the amount to which a student has attained their learning targets and may also denote completing an educational degree. The principal's role is reported as one of the vital components for schools' academic achievement measured by standardized tests (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). Many studies are available on the indirect effect of school leaders on academic achievement but how principals directly effect is scarcely conducted.

It is observed that leadership styles in public and private sector secondary schools vary in terms of their effectiveness in Pakistan. In the public sector the principals are reported conservative while in the private sector the modern strategies of leadership are being practiced. Keeping in view the emerged concepts of commercialization and globalization in education, it is essential to explore the facts regarding successful school leadership trends to bring improvements in schools through effective leadership.

Theoretical Framework

The transactional theory became controversial because of its strict control over the subordinates, ignoring their potentials, capabilities, innovativeness, and emotions (Wei, Yuan, & Di, 2010). It is argued in many studies that this leadership approach is based on the lower-level needs of Maslow's Hierarchy and such types of managerial styles do not impact the organizational performance for a longer time especially in the education sector where the fast-paced innovation is the core component. But these perceptions proved wrong in many types of research and found transactional leadership behaviors effective in improving employees performance in schools (Paracha, Qamar, Mirza, Inam ul, & Waqas, 2012). Seeing emerging influence of transactional leadership behaviors in diverse industries the current research is designed to find the effect of transactional leadership behaviors of school principals on teachers' teachers' effectiveness, extra effort and their satisfaction by designing the following theoretical framework and research questions

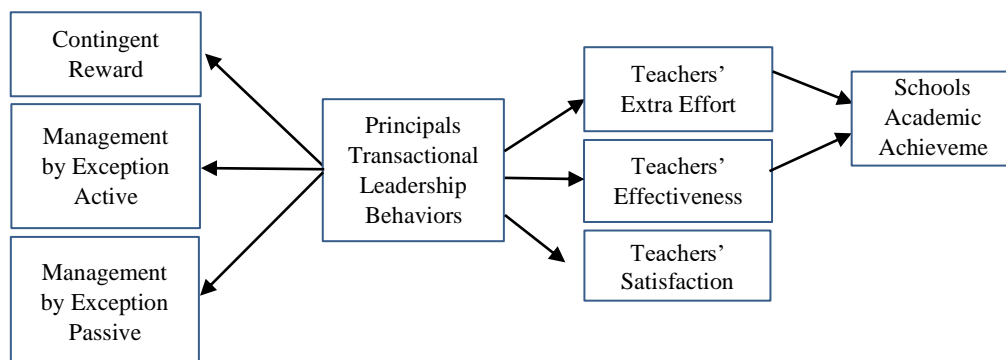


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Research Questions

On the basis of the literature review following research questions were developed

- Q.1: Is there any significant relationship between principals' transactional leadership behaviors and their extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.
- Q.2: Is there any significant difference in the mean scores of public and private secondary school principals' transactional leadership behaviors and their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.
- Q.3: Does a significant difference exist in the mean scores between transactional leadership behaviors, their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction in high and low achieving secondary schools.
- Q.4: Does a significant difference exist between the mean scores of public and private secondary schools' academic achievement.

Research Method

The cross-sectional quantitative survey research design was selected for the study as it is considered the most suitable to collect data from a large sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). The population of the study consisted of the school principals of the private and public secondary schools affiliated with the Lahore Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE). The District Lahore was taken as the target population. The principals were selected through purposive sampling from the list of gazettes provided by BISE on the basis of their CGPAs. The schools with 3 and above CGPA were considered as high achieving schools while those below 3 CGPA were considered as low achieving schools. Transactional leadership behaviors were analyzed among 235 (72 public school + 163 private) principals and 2350 teachers (10 teachers randomly selected from each school teaching at secondary level) of private and public secondary schools

Instrumentation

For data collection the subscale MLQ of transactional leadership behaviors comprising three behaviors (contingent reward, management by exception active and management by exception passive) was taken. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5x form (MLQ 5xForm) consists of two forms (leader and rater forms) that was developed by Bass and Avolio, in 2004 was selected for this study. The Leader's Form was applied to identify the leadership style of the school principals while a rater form was administered on teachers to see how they perceive their principal's transactional leadership behaviors and their effect on three outcome factors of leadership behaviors: extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction. MLQ consists of two transactional leadership behaviors; Contingent Reward and Management by Exception Active. Three factors as outcomes of leadership styles were

also included in MLQ (5xshort form). These outcome factors were Extra Effort, Effectiveness, and Satisfaction. The reliability of the transactional leadership scale on MLQ ranged from 0.79 - 0.8

Results

RQ.1: Is there any significant relationship between principals' transactional leadership behaviors and their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.

Table 1

Coefficient of Correlation between Principals' Transactional Leadership Behaviors and their Teachers' Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction.

Transactional Leadership Behaviors	Correlation(r)
CR	-.057
MBEA	-.043
MBEP	-.154*
EE	.382**
EFF	.395**
SAT	.354**

**P<.01 CR= *Contingent Reward*, MBEA=*Management by Exception Active*, MBEP=*Management by Exception Passive* EE=*Extra Effort*, EFF=*Effectiveness*, SAT= *Satisfaction*

The Pearson coefficient of correlation was run. The results show that there is no significant positive relationship between two transactional leadership behaviors; Contingent Reward CR, MBEA, and students' academic achievement. The MBEP was found negatively correlated ($r=-.154^*$, $p<.01$) with schools' academic performance. The outcome factor of transactional leadership behaviors; EE ($r=.382$, $p<.01$) EFF ($r=.395$, $p<.01$), and satisfaction were significant and positive ($r=.354$, $p<0.01$) in a relationship. The leaders' EE, EFF, and satisfaction lead the schools' academic achievement.

RQ.2: Is there any significant difference in the mean scores of public and private secondary school principals' transactional leadership behaviors and their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.

Table 2

The Difference in the Mean Scores of Public and Private Secondary School Principals' Transactional Leadership Behaviors and their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction.

Transactional Leadership Behaviors	Public Principals Mean	School SD	Private Principals Mean	School SD	t	df	p
CR	2.98	0.48	3.06	0.45	-1.228	233	.220
MBEA	2.92	0.55	2.96	0.50	-.543	233	.588
MBEP	1.63	0.87	1.12	0.77	4.562	233	<.01**
EE	2.57	0.68	2.72	0.77	-7.35	233	<.01**
EFF	2.59	0.37	2.82	0.50	-3.54	233	<.01**
SAT	2.83	0.54	3.05	0.55	-2.904	233	<.01**

** $P < .01$

To see the difference between transactional leadership behaviors of the public and private sector the independent sample t-test was conducted. The scores show that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of two transactional leadership behaviors CR & MBEA of public and private sector school principals but MBEP is observed more practiced in public secondary schools than private. The mean scores of three outcome factors were also significant between public and private schools EE $t(233) = -7.35$, $p = .003$ EFF $t(233) = -3.54$, $p = .000$ and satisfaction $t(233) = -2.904$, $p = .004$. The private secondary school principals were found more satisfied, effective, and committed than public school principals.

RQ.3: Does a significant difference exist in the mean scores between transactional leadership behaviors, their teachers' extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction in high and low achieving secondary schools.

Table 3

Mean Comparison of Mean Scores between Transactional Leadership Behaviors, their teachers' Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction in High and Low Achieving Secondary Schools

Transactional Leadership Behaviors	High Achieving Schools		Low Achieving Schools		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
CR	3.04	0.48	3.03	0.44	.097	.922
MBEA	2.97	0.53	2.94	0.51	.331	.741
MBEP	1.14	0.80	1.35	0.85	-1.796	.074
Extra Effort	3.14	0.57	2.13	0.69	11.281	<.01**
Effectiveness	3.04	0.48	2.59	0.40	7.764	<.01**
Satisfaction	3.33	0.40	2.81	0.55	7.447	<.01**

** $P < .01$

There is no significant mean difference between transactional leadership behaviors and high and low-achieving schools. The outcome factors of transactional leadership behaviors; extra effort and satisfaction were found significant with $t(233) = 11.281$, $p = .000$, and $t(233) = 7.447$, $p < .01$ respectively. EE, EFF, and satisfaction of secondary school principals were the most prevalent factors in high-achieving schools than low achieving schools.

RQ.4: Does a significant difference exists between the mean scores of public and private secondary schools' academic achievement

Table 4

T-test of Public and Private Secondary Schools' Academic Achievement

Public		Private		f	p
Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1.97	.529	3.02	.816	55.62	.001**

Post hoc analysis was done to see the difference in mean scores between public and private secondary schools' academic achievement. The table results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of public and private secondary schools' academic achievement $F(1) = 55.62$, $p < .01$. Private schools' leaders' means are higher than in public schools. So, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the means scores of sectors and students' achievement is rejected.

Discussion

This study was two-fold in nature; the first was to see the difference in transactional leadership behaviors practiced in public and private secondary schools. The second was its impact on low and high-achieving public and private secondary schools in the District of Lahore. The public sector school principals were found practicing more MBEP than private principals and private secondary school principals were more practicing effective strategies for extra effort and satisfaction. The findings are similar to some extent with the study conducted by Khan, Bano, Bano, and Khan, (2017) reported that in Pakistan's public secondary school principals are bound to follow the centralized system of education for seeking just compliance and express themselves less proactive in their jobs for making innovation. Therefore, they usually are observed passive and intervene only for the corrections rather than avoiding mistakes.

Contrary studies are available on the effectiveness of both the dimensions of transactional leadership styles. Raveendran, (2021) found contingent reward and management by exception passive as ineffective and management by exception active more effective for improving employee's performance. This demonstrates that the principals interfere only when the process and standards are not fulfilled to achieve the required

targets. These findings are corroborated to some extent with a study conducted by those who found no direct impact of transactional leadership behaviors on the performance of the organization. There is another study conducted by Ojokuku et al. (2012) and found a negative effect of transactional leadership behaviors on the performance of the organization and argued that transactional leadership behaviors demoralize the employees and increase turnover intentions. Al Khajeh (2018) and Longe (2014), shared contrary findings and found a positive significant relationship between transactional leadership behaviors and organizational performance.

The outcome factor of transactional leadership behaviors; EE, EFF, and employees' satisfaction was positively correlated with schools' academic achievement. The principals' behaviors to promote EE, EFF and satisfaction lead the schools' academic achievement. It is supported by several pieces of research that school principals indirectly impact the school's academic achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006) by motivating, empowering, and fulfilling the needs of the teachers (Ross & Gray, 2006). These findings are also consistent with the study of Andrabi, Das, & Khawaja (2008) who observed private school principals more effective in maintaining the quality of education in schools than public school principals as they enjoy the freedom of autonomy than public school principals and this makes them less effective and satisfied. Research supports that school leadership does not impact schools' academic achievement directly but by increasing teachers' effectiveness, effort, and satisfaction (Ross & Gray, 2006).

To embrace the rapid innovation in the education sector especially in educationally developing countries like Pakistan requires something beyond leadership behaviors e.g., extra efforts, effectiveness, and satisfaction. These areas need to explore how schools' academic performance can be improved by creating an environment where the teachers and the principals can work with extra commitment, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Compliance and stability are not the requirements of the current century of an educational revolution.

The second fold of this study was to see the difference of transactional leadership behaviors in high and low achieving schools, and there is no significant difference of mean scores between transactional leadership behaviors in high and low achieving schools but the extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction were found significant.

There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of public and private sector school leaders. The private secondary school principals' teachers were more effective, satisfied, and contributed extra effort to the academic achievement of the schools. So, the effective school principal can transform the teachers into professional, motivated, directed, and hardworking followers to achieve the targets in the form of schools' achievement. They are observed to be more engaged in professional development programs and more empowered.

Conclusions

The public sector school principals were found practicing more MBEP than private principals and private secondary school principals were more practicing effective strategies for increasing teachers' extra effort and satisfaction. The outcome factor of transactional leadership behaviors; teachers' extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction was positively correlated with schools' academic achievement. The principals' behaviors to promote teachers' extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction lead the schools' academic achievement. The private secondary school principals were more effective in increasing the teachers' satisfaction, therefore, they contributed with EE for the academic achievement of the schools. EE, EFF, and satisfaction of secondary school teachers were the most prevalent factors in high-achieving schools than low achieving schools.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, following recommendations are made:

- The public sector secondary school principals are required to practice strategies to increase the extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction of their teachers to improve their performance which ultimately positively influences the schools' academic achievement.
- The professional development of the secondary school principals should be planned to increase their effectiveness, extra effort, and satisfaction.
- The school principals need to be empowered to play an independent role beyond policy compliance and implementation so they can perform with their innovative and creative talents to become effective.

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