

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE AMONG SCHOOL LEADERS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine how school leaders in Punjab, Pakistan, show authentic leadership traits and apply principles from The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey), to make a comparison and contrast the two styles in the educational leadership context. The objectives of the study were: (1) to compare the relationship between the dimensions of authentic leadership styles of educational leaders and the seven habits of highly effective people at the level of independence, the level of interdependence, and the level of continuous improvement. The population of the study was all (42) Districts of the Province of Punjab, all (8087) Secondary Schools in the Province of Punjab, all (4178) Headmasters of Secondary Schools of the Province of Punjab, all (3909) Headmistresses of Secondary Schools of the Province of Punjab, and all (45424) Secondary School Teachers of Public Secondary School of Punjab. A multistage purposive stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. The population of the study comprised various subgroups or strata, i.e., Countryside and urban, male and female, so a stratified purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Data was collected by means of four Questionnaires, two of which were designed on a five-point Likert scale and two on a six-point Likert scale related to the seven habits of highly effective and authentic leadership style. Self-reported authentic leadership styles and views about secondary school teachers were analyzed by considering the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People as defined by Covey. The initial stage was "Level of Independence" where educational leaders were measured by using the first three habits: "Be Proactive", "Begin with the end in mind", and "Put first things first". Those educational leaders who were successful at this Level were considered to measure "the level of interdependence" and usefulness at the Second Stage by means of the next three habits: "Think win/win", "Seek first to understand then to be understood", and "Synergize". Those educational leaders who remained effective at the Second Level were considered to find out the level of Continuous improvement by using the habit "Sharpen the Saw".

The study highlights significant similarities between the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and authentic leadership practices. Specifically, the habits of interdependence and continuous development predict leadership effectiveness, suggesting that these habits are central to the authentic leadership style of school heads. The findings also show that female heads and in-charge heads tend to score higher in continuous development, while urban heads show higher levels of independence compared to their rural counterparts

The main findings of the study were that the prevailing leadership style of secondary school leaders in the Punjab Education Department was reasonable, but not up to global standards. The final recommendations were made to offer clear strategies for the selection of the leaders, and to establish a specific cell to inculcate and enhance the seven habits of highly effective people among the school leaders, therefore meeting the quality education and global market. The first dimension of AL self-awareness is integrated habits, such as sharpening the saw and being proactive.

1. INTRODUCTION

The collaboration of leaders and teachers in an institution is the most important feature of the educational process, but is mostly neglected. The question is this: some leadership styles beat the teacher's relationships, and why some impose dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is crucial to

evaluate the impacts of leadership style. In other words, it is crucial to evaluate “how effectively these educational leaders of secondary schools contribute towards attaining goals, raising competencies, managing change, and positive workplace behavior in their schools to improve quality education.

Authentic leadership is an innovative theory of leadership that was developed at the turn of the century on the need for ethically responsible as well as reliable leaders (Northouse, 2013). In the article, Luthans and Avolio (2020) used the term authentic " for the first time in a positive leadership style and defined “Authentic Leadership is a process that contributes both constructive and demonstrative dimensions in a developed executive context, which results in both more self-consciousness and self-controlled optimistic behavior on the leaders’ part p.3 (Macalino.J. 2024).

In the context of Punjab, school leaders face increasing pressures of globalization, technological advancement, and educational reforms such as the Punjab Education Sector Reforms Program (PESRP). However, limited research in Pakistan has examined how authentic leadership interacts with Covey’s seven habits in school leadership. While studies abroad highlight their impact on academic achievement and leadership effectiveness (Shetty et al., 2021; Ahmad, 2021), the gap in indigenous research persists.

Therefore, this study makes a comparison of authentic leadership and the seven habits of highly effective people among secondary school heads in Punjab. It aims to compare the relationship between authentic leadership and the seven habits of highly effective people. how these relationships contribute to school improvement, teacher motivation, and educational quality, thereby addressing a critical need for effective leadership in Pakistan’s education sector

This study makes a comparison of the relationship between authentic leadership dimensions and the seven habits of highly effective people among secondary school heads in Punjab. It aims to identify which habits exist among the secondary school heads and how these habits contribute to leadership effectiveness, personal development, and improved school performance. By linking these two frameworks, the study seeks to enhance leadership capacity and provide practical strategies for improving school leadership and educational outcomes in Pakistan.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to;

Compare the relationship between the dimensions of authentic leadership styles of educational leaders at the level of independence, the level of interdependence, and the level of continuous improvement.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following, the research questions were framed for the research objective of this study

- 1.2.1 To what extent is the self-awareness of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools’ leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level?
- 1.2.2 To what extent is the balanced processing of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools’ leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level?
- 1.2.3 To what extent is the transparency of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools’ leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level?
- 1.2.4 To what extent are the moral values of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools’ leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level?

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may contribute to the works on leadership at the level of both knowledge and practical skills for educational development through practicing the effectiveness of authentic leadership skills concerning the seven habits of effective people.

- It has revealed the relationship between highly effective people's habits and authentic leadership style.
- The study presented a holistic framework of personal and professional development.
- It pinpointed the specific barriers and opportunities for bringing change in public secondary schools of Punjab to improve the quality of education.
- The study may provide profound insights for personal and institutional growth. That attracts the consideration of policymakers and school leaders in focusing on effective leadership styles to achieve the targets of secondary education.
- The study provided value-driven leadership where leaders are accountable to the public and students.
- The study highlighted the leadership culture in educational institutions and provided suggestions to improve educational outcomes.
- The study may enhance the effectiveness of educational leaders by distinguishing their usefulness at the levels of independence, interdependence, and continuous improvement. that may improve the organizational culture.
- It may provide a significant framework to increase the level of performance of the educational leaders at the school level.
- The study proposed actionable strategies to improve quality leadership in education.

1.4 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the shortage of time and resources, the study was delimited to Avolio's four dimensions of authentic leadership: self-awareness, transparency, Balanced processing, and internalized moral. The study was confined to Covey's seven habits of highly effective people and secondary level public schools in Punjab (01 to 10 & 06 to 10).

2. LITERATURE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research highlights that effective school leadership is crucial for school improvement and meeting global educational standards (Velez et al., 2017). Leadership not only guides organizational direction but also influences the quality of education, which is vital for survival in a globalized world (Abasilim et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2018). Effective leaders inspire commitment, foster teamwork, and ensure continuous improvement by aligning their leadership style with institutional goals (Louis, 2010). Scholars argue that meaningful innovation in education requires a closer review of educational leaders' leadership styles (Muthoni & Konji, 2015).

Most existing research on Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and school leadership originates from Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding its relevance in Pakistan. Since the attainment of organizational goals largely depends on leadership performance, it is important to explore whether Pakistani school leaders' practices align with these habits. Authentic leadership based on integrity, self-awareness, and positive impact may make available the right framework for this alignment. (Heminsley, & Wolsak, 2020).

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Comparative analysis of authentic leadership and the seven habits of highly effective people among school leaders in Pakistan

Comparative Analysis of Authentic Leadership and The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People among School Leaders in Pakistan

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP



- Self-awareness
- Relational transparency
- Balanced processing
- Internalized moral perspective

THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE



BE PROACTIVE



**BEGIN WITH
THE END IN MIND**



**PUT FIRST
THINGS FIRST**

The study develops a conceptual framework comparing Authentic Leadership and The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People among school leaders in Pakistan. Authentic leadership emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective, which foster trust and goal achievement. Covey's (2015) seven habits are structured across independence, interdependence, and continuous improvement levels. This framework explores how authentic leadership dimensions align with these three levels to enhance leadership effectiveness. Drawing on prior research, the study highlights the complementary role of both models in strengthening ethical, effective, and growth-oriented school leadership.

3. RESEARCH ETHODOLOGY

This Study was descriptive in Nature. A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without any manipulation (i.e., change in environment). The research used a quantitative design. Quantitative research deals with a systematic method of inquiry that quantifies the collection and analysis of data. Quantitative research uses structured tools that can be numerically coded and analyzed (Creswell, 2014). In this study, a survey of selected secondary school heads and teachers was conducted. Data were collected through questionnaires. There were two variables: authentic leadership style and the seven habits of effective people. The study compares the relationship of two variables, authentic leadership and the seven habits of highly effective people, using a Test of significance. Both the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and Authentic Leadership are grounded in humanistic philosophy based on deontological ethics, transformational leadership, and humanistic philosophies, which are deeply linked with self-awareness, personal growth, personal effectiveness, and purpose-driven action (Peerman, 2021). The SHHEP is related to the theory of effectiveness. The frameworks of both SHHEP and AL are related to virtue ethics, exceptionalism and transformational ethics and moral philosophies.

3.1 Population of the study

The population of the study was as follows.

- All (42) Districts of the Province of Punjab
- All (8087) Secondary Schools in the Province of Punjab.
- All (4178) Headmasters of Secondary Schools in the Province of Punjab.
- All (3909) Headmistresses of Secondary Schools of the Province of Punjab.
- All (45424) Secondary School Teachers of Public Secondary Schools of Punjab.
(PMIU, 2023)

3.2 Sampling Technique

A multistage stratified purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study. The population of the study consisted of many subgroups or strata; i.e., Rural and urban, male and female, so a stratified non-proportional sampling technique was used to select the sample.

3.2.1 Sampling procedure and size of the Sample

In this study, the researcher applied multistage stratified random sampling to select the sample for the study.

1. At the first stage, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select the 50% districts from 3 strata, i.e., NP (North Punjab), CP (Central Punjab), and SP (South Punjab).
2. At the second stage, schools in the sampled districts were divided into two subgroups, i.e., rural and urban.
3. At the third stage, sampled schools were divided into two strata: male and female strata.
4. At the fourth stage of sampling, the simple random sampling technique was applied to select sample schools from rural, urban, male, and female strata.
5. The non-proportional sample was applied to draw from each stratum at the fifth stage.
6. 420 Headmaster and Headmistress were taken as samples (210+210).
7. 840 (02 from each school) Male and Female secondary school teachers were taken as samples purposively, as the most senior and from the same schools.

2.3.2 Instruments and their development

For the collection of data related to the seven habits of highly effective people, six-point Likert scale questionnaires “Strongly Disagree”, “Agree”, “Slightly Disagree”, “Slightly Disagree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree” were designed according to the guidance of the experts. One questionnaire was developed for secondary school leaders/heads, and one related for secondary school teachers was developed. Data related to authentic leadership consisted of a Five-point Likert scale: “neutral”, disagree, agree ‘strongly agree,’ and strongly disagree. The data was collected through an adopted questionnaire, which was originally designed by Walumbwa, Avolio, and Gardner (2007).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data analysis and interpretation find out the seven habits of highly effective people and the authentic leadership style of school heads in public secondary schools across Punjab. This chapter compares how these habits are related to authentic leadership styles. The findings are thoughtfully presented to address the research questions and test, shedding light on leadership practices in educational settings. By employing quantitative techniques, the collected data were systematically processed, organized, and analyzed to uncover meaningful insights. These

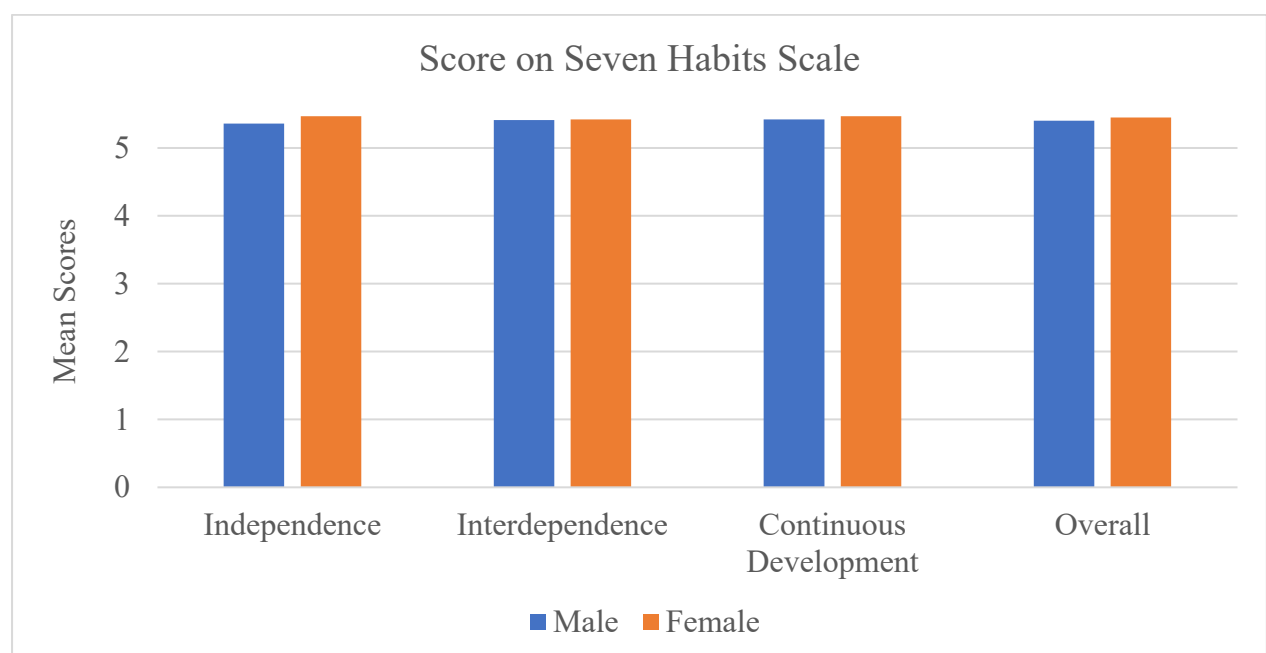
insights contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics, offering valuable perspectives for both theory and practice in leadership development within schools

The data for this study were gathered from 420 school heads (210 male + 210 female) and 840 secondary school teachers(420male+420female) from public secondary schools across Punjab. The information collected focuses on the implementation of the seven habits of highly effective people and their connection to the authentic leadership style of school heads. By involving both school heads and teachers, the study provides a well-rounded view of leadership practices. It evaluates these practices not only from the self-reported experiences of school heads but also from the perspectives of teachers, who experience the impact of their leadership firsthand. This dual-source approach ensures a more reliable and nuanced understanding of how these habits shape and relate to authentic leadership in educational institutions.

The comparative analysis of authentic leadership and the seven habits of highly effective people among school leaders in Pakistan was made and female teachers scored significantly higher than male teachers in **Independence** ($t=-3.59, p=0.00$) and the **Overall Seven Habits** score ($t=-2.65, p=0.01$). However, no significant gender differences were observed in **Interdependence** ($t=-0.37, p=0.7$) or **Continuous Development** ($t=-1.70, p=0.09$). These results suggest that while both genders are similar in most areas, female teachers demonstrate higher effectiveness in Independence and overall application of the Seven Habits.

Figure 2

Comparison of Male and Female Teachers on the Seven Habits of their heads/leaders



5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the results retrieved from the quantitative analysis of the data. The findings of the data throw light on the conclusion. The quantitative data were based on the six-point Likert scale and the five-point Likert scale and analyzed through SPSS, Pearson correlation, and t-test. The findings of the study pointed to a relationship between dimensions of the AL and the SHHEP among the school leaders /heads. The study sheds light on how Covey's habits supported the leaders in cultivating authenticity, which provides philosophical

foundations to authentic leaders. The study investigates how the practices of the SHHEP equipped the leaders to build trust and engage followers to achieve the set targets. The following are findings on School Heads' Authentic Leadership Styles and the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People are given as under:

Compare the relationship between the dimensions of authentic leadership styles of educational leaders at the level of independence, the level of interdependence, and the level of continuous improvement.

Authentic leadership's first dimension, self-awareness, is deeply connected with Covey's first level of independence as being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, and first things first. The AL dimension of self-awareness and the level of independence are both related to personal mastery. The second dimension of AL relational transparency is related to Covey's second level of interdependence. Both focused on effective interpersonal relationships. The third dimension of AL balanced processing is related to habits 5 and 6, which seek first to understand, which urges an effective leader to gather perspective before making decisions. Synergize makes leaders collaborate before making decisions. The fourth dimension of AL's internalized moral perspective is related to the third level of continuous development, the 7th habit: Sharpen the Saw.

1. **Demographic Comparisons:** no significant differences in authentic leadership styles based on gender, location (urban vs. rural), or role (Head Masters vs. In-charge Heads).
2. **Gender:** No significant differences between male and female school heads in authentic leadership styles.
3. **Local (Urban vs. Rural):** No significant differences in leadership styles between rural and urban school heads.
4. **Role (Head Masters vs. In-charge Heads):** No significant differences observed between Head Masters and In-charge Heads
5. **Role Differences (Head Masters vs. In-charge Heads):** In-charge Heads score higher in Continuous Development and overall, Seven Habits score, with significant differences.
6. **Rural vs. Urban Differences:** Urban Heads score higher in Independence than rural heads with significant differences.
7. **No significant differences** in Interdependence and Continuous Development.
8. **Gender:** No significant differences between male and female school heads in authentic leadership styles.
9. **Local (Urban vs. Rural):** No significant differences in leadership styles between rural and urban school heads.
10. **Role (Head Masters vs. In-charge Heads):** No significant differences observed between Head Masters and In-charge Heads.
11. **Regression Analysis:** Independence and Interdependence are strong predictors of authentic leadership

- **To what extent is the self-awareness of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools' leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level and continuous development level?**

Authentic leadership's first dimension, self-awareness, is deeply connected with Covey's first level of independence as being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, and first things first. The AL dimension of self-awareness and the level of independence are both related to personal mastery

- **To what extent is the balanced processing of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools' leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level?**

Consultative Decision-Making A notable finding is that 72% of school heads prefer consulting others before making decisions, indicating a commitment to collaborative leadership practices. This consultative approach aligns with Covey's emphasis on interdependence and collaboration as essential habits for effective leadership. However, while 73% listen to differing viewpoints there remains room for improvement in actively considering these perspectives before finalizing decisions.

- **To what extent is the transparency of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools' leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level?**

The data indicate that school heads value authenticity, with 60% allowing others to see who they truly are. Yet challenges remain in presenting a false front and admitting mistakes. These struggles suggest that while leaders may strive for transparency, they may still grapple with vulnerability—an essential trait for authentic leadership

- **what extent are the moral values of the authentic leadership style of public secondary schools' leaders related to the independence level, interdependence level, and continuous development level/**

The findings show a strong alignment with core values among school heads, as evidenced by the high mean score for the statement regarding moral guidance in leadership. This indicates that school heads prioritize ethical decision-making and transparency, with 67% agreeing they are open about controversial issues.

5.1 DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that school heads actively seek input from others and listen to dissenting viewpoints, reflecting an openness to diverse perspectives. However, there is a moderate level of inconsistency in listening to others' ideas before making decisions.

School heads generally value authenticity in their interactions, though challenges remain in areas such as admitting mistakes and avoiding the presentation of false fronts. These aspects require further attention to promote deeper relational transparency

The study found no significant differences in authentic leadership practices based on gender, location (rural vs. urban), or role (Head Masters vs. In-charge Heads). This suggests that authentic leadership is universally valued and practiced by school heads across these demographic categories.

School heads exhibit high levels of professional independence, demonstrating confidence in managing tasks, fostering relationships with employees, and taking responsibility for success. While they show strong conflict resolution skills, there is room for improvement in this area.

The results further highlight that the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People have a significant correlation with authentic leadership practices. Specifically, the habits of interdependence and continuous development predict leadership effectiveness, suggesting that these habits are central to the authentic leadership style of school heads. The findings also show that female heads and In-charge Heads tend to score higher in continuous development, while urban heads show higher levels of independence compared to their rural counterparts.

Teachers report positive views of their school leaders, emphasizing qualities such as proactivity, clear communication, and the ability to maintain strong relationships with staff. These perceptions align with the authentic leadership qualities demonstrated by school heads and suggest that these leadership traits positively influence school culture and teacher performance.

This research demonstrates that the practice of authentic leadership among school heads is largely characterized by self-awareness, ethical decision-making, relational transparency, and a commitment to professional growth. The findings suggest that school leaders who integrate the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People into their leadership styles foster positive relationships, engage in reflective practices, and actively seek personal and professional development. However, areas such as improving conflict resolution and enhancing relational transparency through more open admission of mistakes and avoiding false fronts offer opportunities for further development. The lack of significant differences based on gender, location, and role further underscores the universality of authentic leadership across different contexts within Punjab's public secondary schools. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between leadership habits and authentic leadership styles, providing valuable guidance for the development of school leadership training programs.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on research findings and discussion.

This study explored and compared the relationship between the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and the authentic leadership style of school heads in public secondary schools in Punjab. The key findings highlight that school heads generally exhibit positive authentic leadership characteristics, such as strong self-awareness, a clear alignment with core moral values, transparency, and openness to diverse perspectives. Authentic leadership's first dimension, self-awareness, is deeply connected with Covey's first level of independence as being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, and first things first. The AL dimension of self-awareness and the level of independence are both related to personal mastery. The second dimension of AL relational transparency is related to Covey's second level of interdependence. Both focused on effective interpersonal relationships. The third dimension of AL balanced processing is related to habits 5 and 6 seek first to understand, which urges an effective leader to gather perspective before making decisions. Synergize makes leaders collaborate before making decisions. the fourth dimension of AL's internalized moral perspective is related to the third level of continuous development 7th habit sharpens the saw.

The school heads also demonstrate high levels of interdependence and commitment to continuous personal and professional development, which aligns with the foundational principles of the Seven Habit School heads exhibit moderate to strong levels of self-awareness, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, though areas such as seeking feedback and self-acceptance show some room for improvement. School heads demonstrate a strong alignment with their core values, especially in the role of a leader, and are transparent in their positions on controversial issues. However, there is variability in their ability to resist group pressure, suggesting the need for further growth in maintaining moral integrity under challenging circumstances

The findings indicate that school heads actively seek input from others and listen to dissenting viewpoints, reflecting an openness to diverse perspectives. However, there is a moderate level of inconsistency in listening to others' ideas before making decisions. School heads generally value authenticity in their interactions, though challenges remain in areas such as admitting mistakes and avoiding the presentation of false fronts. These aspects require further attention to promote deeper relational transparency. The study found no significant differences in authentic leadership practices based on gender, location (rural vs. urban), or role (Head Masters vs. In-charge Heads). This suggests that authentic leadership is universally valued and practiced by school heads across these demographic categories. School heads exhibit high levels of professional independence, demonstrating confidence in managing tasks, fostering relationships with employees, and taking responsibility for success. While they show strong conflict resolution skills, there is room for improvement in this area.

The results further highlight that the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People significantly correlate with authentic leadership practices. Specifically, the habits of interdependence and continuous development predict leadership effectiveness, suggesting that these habits are central to the authentic leadership style of school heads. The findings also show that female heads and In-charge Heads tend to score higher in continuous development, while urban heads show higher levels of independence compared to their rural counterparts. Teachers report positive views of their school leaders, emphasizing qualities such as proactivity, clear communication, and the ability to maintain strong relationships with staff. These perceptions align with the authentic leadership qualities demonstrated by school heads and suggest that these leadership traits positively influence school culture and teacher performance.

This research demonstrates that the practice of authentic leadership among school heads is largely characterized by self-awareness, ethical decision-making, relational transparency, and a commitment to professional growth. The findings suggest that school leaders who integrate the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People into their leadership styles foster positive relationships, engage in reflective practices, and actively seek personal and professional development. However, areas such as improving conflict resolution and enhancing relational transparency through more open admission of mistakes and avoiding false fronts offer opportunities for further development. The lack of significant differences based on gender, location, and role further underscores the universality of authentic leadership across different contexts within Punjab's public secondary schools. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between leadership habits and authentic leadership styles, providing valuable guidance for the development of school leadership training programs.

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