PERSONAL SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract:
This quantitative study investigated the perceptions of public secondary school principals and teachers in District Quetta regarding the personal skills of school principals. Employing a descriptive quantitative research design, the study sampled 100 principals and 100 teachers from 113 government secondary schools. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Results revealed a pervasive and statistically significant perceptual gap across all eight examined aspects of principals' personal skills. Significant differences were found in perceptions regarding: establishing professional relationships with teaching faculty (Sig. = 0.000), enjoying good relationships with the local community (Sig. = 0.003), sharing and communicating relevant information (Sig. = 0.000), the regularity of staff meetings (Sig. = 0.000), incorporating inputs in administrative decisions (Sig. = 0.000), arranging gatherings with students (Sig. = 0.000), providing support for teacher decision-making (Sig. = 0.000), and consistently providing a conducive learning environment (Sig. = 0.000). In all instances, principals held more positive self-perceptions compared to the perceptions held by teachers. This consistent pattern of discrepancy highlights a critical need for attention to communication, relationship building, and shared understanding between school leadership and teaching staff in District Quetta's secondary schools. Addressing these perceptual gaps is crucial for enhancing overall school effectiveness, improving teacher morale, and ultimately benefiting student outcomes.

Keywords: *Personal Skills, Perceptions, School Principals, Teachers, Educational Leadership, Perceptual Gap.*

Introduction

The education sector globally and within Pakistan critically relies on professional and effective leadership to support a sustainable and high-quality educational system. School principals, as pivotal figures, are at the forefront of this endeavor, influencing every aspect from curriculum implementation to fostering a productive learning environment and ultimately shaping student achievement (Alam, 2022; Azainil et al., 2021). The evolving landscape of education, marked by rapid societal changes and new demands (Essien, 2020), necessitates that principals possess a diverse and sophisticated array of competencies beyond traditional administrative duties.

Indeed, the effectiveness of a school principal is inextricably linked to the quality of their management abilities and leadership character (Bahri et al., 2023). This includes not only technical and administrative proficiencies but, crucially, a robust set of personal skills. These personal attributes, such as creative, imaginative, and motivational skills, are vital for inspiring teaching staff and driving the attainment of institutional goals. Specifically, interpersonal abilities are consistently highlighted for their role in staff counseling and motivation, significantly contributing to the improvement of teaching quality (Laghari et al., 2024). Furthermore, direct interaction and communication skills between school principals and teachers play a major role in their respective workplace performances (Hermawan & Antoni, 2021). Effective decision-making, which is paramount in school management, also heavily relies on the principal's capacity to assess needs, organize work, and allocate resources (Khalid et al., 2023).

Despite the recognized importance of such leadership and management qualities, concerns regarding the actual quality of head teachers, particularly in regions like Balochistan, highlight a critical need for attention to their skills (Javed, 2021). Principals today are expected to be more than just administrators; they must also embody roles as managers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators (Hilal & Syamsu, 2021). How these multifaceted personal and leadership skills are perceived by those within the school community, particularly by the principals themselves and their teaching staff, is fundamental. These perceptions can significantly influence professional relationships, teacher morale, and the overall success of educational initiatives (Marasan et al., 2021). Understanding these differing perspectives is crucial for targeted professional development and for fostering an environment conducive to achieving the educational goals set forth by national policies, such as Pakistan's 2017 National Education Policy aimed at enhancing educational resources (Shah et al., 2022). Therefore, appraising these perceptions in the context of public secondary schools, especially in districts like Quetta, is vital for identifying specific strengths and areas for leadership enhancement.

Theoretical Frameworks:

Diverse leadership theories provide crucial perspectives on achieving effective school management. Transformational Leadership, for instance, centers on motivating and inspiring staff to collaboratively pursue organizational objectives, advocating for a leadership approach that is visionary, intellectually stimulating, and responsive to individual needs. In contrast, Distributed Leadership highlights the significance of shared responsibility and collaboration, acknowledging that school improvement is a collective endeavor. Meanwhile, the Instructional Leadership framework specifically focuses on the principal's vital role in guiding and overseeing teaching and learning processes. This particular theoretical lens emphasizes how principals can foster their personal skills and elevate teacher capabilities. Across the academic literature, there is a consistent emphasis on the paramount importance of personal skills of principals in secondary schools, emphasizing the necessity for principals to actively prioritize these practices and for teachers to recognize their principals as proficient leaders.

Literature review

Effective school leadership is fundamental to educational quality, with various theoretical frameworks—such as Transformational, Distributed, and Instructional Leadership—emphasizing the principal's pivotal role in fostering effective learning environments and enhancing student outcomes (Dewi, 2021). Within these frameworks, a principal's personal skills are increasingly recognized as indispensable. These competencies encompass crucial attributes like clear communication, high emotional intelligence, robust problem-solving and decision-making capabilities, strong interpersonal skills, adaptability, integrity, and the ability to motivate staff (Elisado, 2022; Mujib & Muhammad, 2022). These personal attributes are not merely supplementary but are foundational to a principal's holistic effectiveness, influencing everything from policy implementation to staff morale and pedagogical quality.

Crucially, the perceptual insights of principals' skills by key stakeholders are vital, as perceptions profoundly shape organizational dynamics, trust, and leadership effectiveness (Rofiki et al., 2022). Research frequently indicates that discrepancies exist between a principal's self-perception of their personal skills and the perceptions held by their teaching staff. Such perceptual divergences can impede communication, strain professional relationships, and diminish leadership impact, while greater alignment often correlates with improved collaboration and organizational outcomes (Nuryani & Dessy, 2021). Therefore,

understanding these dual perspectives is essential for identifying authentic leadership strengths and targeting professional development initiatives effectively.

Despite the established importance of principal leadership and personal skills within the broader educational discourse, and acknowledging the specific challenges faced by educational leaders in Pakistan (Javed, 2021; Shah et al., 2022), a significant research gap persists. There is limited empirical investigation that comprehensively appraises the perceptual insights of both principals and teachers regarding the personal skills of secondary school principals within the distinct educational context of Quetta District. This study aims to address this critical void, providing valuable localized data to enhance school leadership and educational outcomes in the region.

Research Objective

To appraise the perception of the public secondary schools' principals and teachers about the personal skills of the schools' principals.

Research Methodology

This study examined the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the personal skills of secondary school principals in District Quetta, Balochistan. A descriptive quantitative research design was employed, as it is ideal for systematically characterizing a population. In this case, the research involved gathering numerical data to assess the perceptions of two distinct groups—principals and teachers—regarding a defined set of personal skills. By utilizing a quantitative approach, the study facilitated the measurement of perceptions and enabled statistical comparisons of views between the groups, thus providing objective insights into the phenomenon being investigated.

Population of the Study

The initial aim of the study was to examine the overall educational landscape of District Quetta, encompassing all principals and teachers in government secondary schools. However, the focus was narrowed to specifically assess the personal skills of secondary school principals, highlighting the comparative perspectives of both principals and teachers. The target population included principals and teachers from 113 government-run secondary schools in the Quetta district. A sampling frame was established to identify and select participating principals and teachers for the collection of data regarding their perceptions of instructional leadership.

Sample and Sampling

The target population for this study comprised principals and teachers from secondary schools in District Quetta. The focus was specifically on the comparative perspectives of these two groups regarding instructional leadership. The total sample size included 200 individuals, consisting of 100 principals (40 male and 60 female) and 100 teachers (40 male and 60 female), selected from the 113 secondary schools in the district. The gender distribution within the sample mirrors the existing ratios observed in the schools. To ensure a representative sample of principals and teachers, stratified random sampling based on gender was employed. Data concerning their perceptions of instructional leadership were collected using a structured questionnaire.

Demographic Characteristics

The sample (N=200), with 100 principals and 100 teachers drawn from the 113 secondary schools in the district, presents a well-balanced representation across key demographics, enhancing the reliability of the findings. Females comprised a significant majority at 60%, with males representing 40% in both groups. This diversity is further highlighted by an equal distribution of respondents holding principals' roles and those serving as teachers, half of each group. Among teachers, an impressive 57% belong to the 30-40 years age range, while 32% are aged 40-50 years, and 11% are in the 50-60 years age range. Principals reflect a

similar age distribution with 61% in the 30-40 years range, 28% in the 40-50 years range, and 11% aged 50-60 years. Academically, an astounding 90% of teachers possess a Master's degree, showcasing a highly educated group, while 6% hold an M.Phil. and 4% attained a Ph.D. In contrast, principals demonstrate solid qualifications as well, with 46% holding master's degrees, 51% having an M.Phil. degree, and 3% achieving a Ph.D. Furthermore, a majority of teachers possess professional qualifications, with 58% holding a B.Ed. Degree and 42% hold a M.Ed. degree, while all principals are equipped with an M.Ed. degree. Moreover, the representation of urban participants is compelling, with 78% hailing from urban schools compared to 22% from rural schools, effectively reflecting the urban-rural dynamics of both groups. This comprehensive data highlights the strength and quality of this sample, providing valuable insights into the educational landscape.

Data Analysis

Data on principals' and teachers' perceptions of principals' personal skills were collected using a piloted questionnaire. These data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. To identify similarities and differences in perceptions between the two groups, descriptive statistics and comparative analysis were employed. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were calculated for each response option (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral/Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) for both principals and teachers, providing a clear overview of response distributions within each group. The analysis then compared these distributions between principals and teachers, examining the percentages for each response option across the two groups to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement. To test for statistically significant differences in perceptions between groups and across demographic variables, inferential statistics were also employed, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). These advanced statistical techniques were utilized to provide a robust examination of the data and identify statistically significant variations.

Ethical Considerations

This study rigorously followed established ethical research protocols, placing a strong emphasis on participants' rights and the integrity of the research. All participants received comprehensive and clear information regarding the research objectives, methodologies, intended applications, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring they were fully informed about their involvement. Participation was entirely voluntary and required explicit consent. We maintained strict confidentiality and anonymity for all participant data, which was collected, processed, and stored with the utmost care. Acknowledging the importance of secure data storage, access to raw data and personal information was restricted solely to the researcher, and all raw data was securely disposed of following the publication of the study.
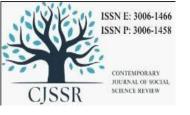
Results

Table 1 presents the comparative perceptions of principals and teachers concerning various aspects of the Personal Skills of Schools' Principals.

Principals' Perspective

Principals demonstrated a robustly positive self-perception regarding their personal and professional skills. A significant majority (85%) affirmed establishing professional relationships with the teaching faculty, with 60% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing. Similarly, positive relationships with the local community were reported by 85% of principals, again with 60% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing. The dissemination of relevant information was also highly rated, with 62% agreeing. Consistent with these findings, 58% of principals agreed that staff meetings are held regularly, indicating unanimous affirmation. The incorporation of input from community members and staff in administrative decisions garnered moderate support, with 53% agreeing. Student gatherings were strongly emphasized, with 70% of principals agreeing they were regularly arranged.

Furthermore, principals indicated strong support for teachers in their decision-making, as evidenced by 52% strongly agreeing. Notably, the creation of a conducive learning environment was identified as a paramount priority, with all principals agreeing, including 68% who strongly agreed.

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher responses indicate varying perceptions regarding the personal skills of school principals. While a moderate level of agreement was observed regarding the establishment of professional relationships (44% agree, 14% strongly agree), perceptions of relationships with the local community were more positive (63% agree). Communication of relevant information received moderate acknowledgment (39% agree), though a notable proportion (24% disagreed). The frequency of staff meetings appears to be a point of concern, with only 28% agreeing that they are held regularly. The incorporation of input from staff and the community in decision-making received mixed responses (40% agree, 32% undecided). Regarding gatherings with students to discuss issues, responses were relatively balanced (28% agree, 27% disagree). Support for teachers' decision-making received limited agreement (31%), and finally, the provision of a conducive learning environment was met with divergent views (40% agreed, but 30% strongly disagreed).

Table 1:

Perception of public secondary schools' principals and teachers on Personal Skills of School Principals. (N=100 Principals and 100 Teachers)

Question	Options	Principal	Teacher	Total	Mean ± SD
I try to establish a professional relationship with the teaching faculty	Strongly Agree	25(25.0%)	14(14.0%)	39(19.5%)	3.95 ± 0.92
	Agree	60(60.0%)	44(44.0%)	104(52.0%)	
	Undecided	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	15(15.0%)	29(29.0%)	44 (22.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	13(13.0%)	13 (6.5%)	
I enjoy good relationships with the local community	Strongly Agree	25(25.0%)	12(12.0%)	37 (18.5%)	3.95 ± 0.92
	Agree	60(60.0%)	63(63.0%)	123(61.5%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	15(15.0%)	12(12.0%)	27 (13.5%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	13(13.0%)	13 (6.5%)	
I share and communicate relevant information with school teachers and students.	Strongly Agree	27(27.0%)	17(17.0%)	44 (22.0%)	4.05 ± 0.84
	Agree	62(62.0%)	39(39.0%)	101(50.5%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	11(11.0%)	24(24.0%)	35 (17.5%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	20(20.0%)	20 (10.0%)	
Staff meetings are arranged regularly.	Strongly Agree	42(42.0%)	8 (8.0%)	50 (25.0%)	4.42 ± 0.49
	Agree	58(58.0%)	28(28.0%)	86 (43.0%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	39(39.0%)	39 (19.5%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	25(25.0%)	25 (12.5%)	
I incorporated inputs from community members and staff in administrative decisions.	Strongly Agree	31(31.0%)	0 (0.0%)	31 (15.5%)	3.99 ± 0.97
	Agree	53(53.0%)	28(28.0%)	81 (40.5%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	16(16.0%)	40(40.0%)	56 (28.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	32(32.0%)	32 (16.0%)	

I arrange gatherings and meetings with students regarding their issues	Strongly Agree	30(30.0%)	24(24.0%)	54 (27.0%)	4.30 ± 0.46
	Agree	70(70.0%)	28(28.0%)	98 (49.0%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	21(21.0%)	21 (10.5%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	27(27.0%)	27 (13.5%)	
I try to provide support to school teachers regarding their decision-making.	Strongly Agree	52(52.0%)	5 (5.0%)	57 (28.5%)	4.52 ± 0.50
	Agree	48(48.0%)	31(31.0%)	79 (39.5%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	30(30.0%)	30 (15.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	34(34.0%)	34 (17.0%)	
I always provide a learning environment.	Strongly Agree	68(68.0%)	30(30.0%)	98 (49.0%)	4.68 ± 0.47
	Agree	32(32.0%)	40(40.0%)	72 (36.0%)	
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	20(20.0%)	20 (10.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	10(10.0%)	10 (5.0%)	

The results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between the public secondary schools' principals' and teachers' perceptions of the Personal Skills of School Principals.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the public secondary schools' principals' and teachers' perceptions about the Personal Skills of School Principals.

The following ANOVA results address Hypothesis 1, comparing principals' and teachers' perceptions of the Personal Skills of School Principals.

Table 2.
ANOVA Results: Comparing Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions of personal skills of school Principals (N=100 Principals and 100 Teachers)

Statement	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I try to establish a professional relationship with the teaching faculty	Between Groups	30.420	1	30.420	22.914	0.000
	Within Groups	262.860	198	1.328		
	Total	293.280	199			
I enjoy good relationships with the local community	Between Groups	10.580	1	10.580	8.886	0.003
	Within Groups	235.740	198	1.191		
	Total	246.320	199			
I share and communicate relevant information with school teachers and students	Between Groups	46.080	1	46.080	32.476	0.000
	Within Groups	280.940	198	1.419		
	Total	327.020	199			
Staff meetings are arranged regularly	Between Groups	174.845	1	174.845	170.446	0.000
	Within Groups	203.110	198	1.026		
	Total	377.955	199			

I incorporated inputs from community members and staff in administrative decisions	Between Groups	153.125	1	153.125	129.995	0.000
	Within Groups	233.230	198	1.178		
	Total	386.355	199			
I arrange gatherings and meetings with students regarding their issues	Between Groups	83.205	1	83.205	60.128	0.000
	Within Groups	273.990	198	1.384		
	Total	357.195	199			
I try to provide support to school teachers regarding their decision-making	Between Groups	218.405	1	218.405	206.446	0.000
	Within Groups	209.470	198	1.058		
	Total	427.875	199			
I always provide a learning environment	Between Groups	58.320	1	58.320	56.121	0.000
	Within Groups	205.760	198	1.039		
	Total	264.080	199			

Table 2 presents the results of the ANOVAs, indicating the significant levels of differences in perceptions between school principals and teachers regarding various statements related to the personal skills of school principals. A significance value (Sig.) less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant difference in perceptions, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for that specific statement.

The results reveal statistically significant differences in perceptions for *all eight* statements: "I try to establish a professional relationship with the teaching faculty" (Sig. = 0.000), "I enjoy good relationships with the local community" (Sig. = 0.003), "I share and communicate relevant information with school teachers and students" (Sig. = 0.000), "Staff meetings are arranged regularly" (Sig. = 0.000), "I incorporated inputs from community members and staff in administrative decisions" (Sig. = 0.000), "I arrange gatherings and settings with students regarding their issues" (Sig. = 0.000), "I try to provide support to school teachers regarding their decision-making" (Sig. = 0.000), and "I always provide a learning environment" (Sig. = 0.000).

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for all eight statements, indicating that school principals and teachers hold significantly different perceptions regarding the examined aspects of the personal skills of school principals. In conclusion, the findings strongly suggest a pervasive difference in how school principals perceive personal skills compared to how these skills are perceived by their teaching staff. This consistent pattern of significant differences across all measured aspects highlights a critical need for attention to communication, relationship building, and shared understanding between school leadership and teachers.

Discussion

The investigation into the differences between teachers' perceptions and principals' self-perceptions provides important insights into educational leadership and the dynamics of school climate. This perceptual gap, extensively documented in Hampton's (2021) research, highlights underlying issues that could impact the overall effectiveness of the school

environment and students' performance. Although both principals and teachers report positive relationships with the local community, substantial differences emerge in other critical areas. For instance, while a majority of principals believe they have established effective professional relationships with their faculty, teachers often express more nuanced views about these interactions, indicating a potential disconnect that may hinder collaborative efforts (Pizarro Fuentes et al., 2024). Communication is a crucial area of concern in educational settings. While principals typically feel confident in their ability to share relevant information, a substantial number of teachers do not share this confidence. This disconnect in perceptions highlights the necessity for improved information-sharing practices, which are essential for fostering trust and collaboration among educators (Antonopoulou et al., 2021; Maqbool et al., 2024).

The frequency and effectiveness of staff meetings also reflect differing perspectives. Principals unanimously assert that these meetings are held regularly, yet only a minority of teachers agree with this view. This stark contrast may reflect divergent expectations or experiences regarding the purpose and outcomes of such gatherings, suggesting a breakdown in communication or dissatisfaction with the meetings' format (De Castro & Jimenez, 2022; Kilag & Sasan, 2023). In terms of decision-making support, notable differences are evident. While half of the principals strongly affirm that they support teachers' involvement in decision-making, only a small number of teachers share this belief, indicating a perceived lack of support and transparency from the principals' side (Pizarro Fuentes et al., 2024). The high number of "undecided" responses among teachers highlights the need for more inclusive and empowering leadership practices that value teacher input (Bellibaş et al., 2024).

Finally, regarding the creation of a conducive learning environment, principals consistently acknowledge its importance, whereas teachers display more mixed feelings. This disparity suggests that while school leadership prioritizes a supportive environment, many educators do not perceive the same level of support and effect in their daily experiences (Samundeeswari, 2024). These findings highlight the necessity for principals to reflect on their self-perceptions and actively seek feedback from their faculty. To bridge these gaps, it is vital to enhance communication, build authentic professional relationships, and involve teachers in decision-making processes (Gudeta, 2022). Such efforts can significantly improve school climate and leadership effectiveness, ultimately benefiting both educators and students (Bellibas & Mesci, 2023).

Conclusion

This study, conducted in District Quetta, revealed a statistically significant perceptual gap between public secondary school principals' self-perceptions of their personal skills and teachers' perceptions of those skills. While principals generally reported positive self-assessments, teachers consistently held more deviating views across key areas. Specifically, significant inconsistencies were found in perceptions regarding professional relationships with faculty, the sharing of relevant information, the regularity and effectiveness of staff meetings, principal support for teacher decision-making, and the provision of a conducive learning environment. This pervasive pattern of differing perceptions emphasizes a critical need for enhanced communication, improved relationship-building strategies, and a shared understanding between school leadership and teaching staff in District Quetta's secondary schools to improve overall school effectiveness, teacher morale, and student outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the identified significant differences between principals and teachers in District Quetta, it is imperative to propose strategic recommendations aimed at fostering a more aligned and effective educational environment within public secondary schools. This necessitates the implementation of targeted professional development for principals,

emphasizing the enhancement of interpersonal and communication competencies, particularly in genuine relationship building, transparent information dissemination, and conflict resolution. Such programs should integrate practical, experiential learning. Furthermore, a comprehensive re-evaluation and optimization of staff meeting protocols are warranted to ensure their perceived value and consistency among teachers, by adopting inclusive, collaborative, and action-oriented frameworks with clear agendas and substantive opportunities for teacher input. Concurrently, the establishment of formal mechanisms is crucial to genuinely integrate teacher input into administrative and instructional decision-making processes, thereby empowering educators. Principals are also urged to proactively demonstrate and communicate their commitment to cultivating a consistently supportive learning environment, addressing aspects that directly impact teacher well-being, professional growth, and pedagogical efficacy. Finally, the institution of regular and structured feedback mechanisms, including confidential channels, is essential to enable principals to engage in critical self-reflection, acknowledge discrepancies in perceptions, and demonstrably act on constructive criticism, thereby strengthening trust and bridging the identified perceptual gaps, ultimately contributing to a more collaborative and effective school environment.

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