

Citation: Adnan, M., Ali, N., & Khan, R. (2023). A Correlational Study of the Principals Instructional Leadership and School Improvement at Secondary School Level in District Mardan. *Global Educational Studies Review*, VIII(II), 159-166.

[https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2023\(VIII-II\).15](https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2023(VIII-II).15)

A Correlational Study of the Principals' Instructional Leadership and School Improvement at Secondary School Level in District Mardan

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Abstract: *The study investigates the relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement at the secondary school level in district Mardan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. This study aimed to investigate this relationship through a correlational survey (quantitative) research design. All 2644 teachers (male/female) of 167 public sector secondary schools constituted the population of this study. A close-ended questionnaire comprising 39 items was used personally by the researcher to collect data from 335 teachers of 118 secondary schools through a stratified random sampling technique. The collected data was interpreted through SPSS by using the Pearson r test. The findings reveal a positive-significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement. The study evidently verified that the better utilization of the instructional role leads to visionary school improvement.*

Key Words: Correlational Study, Instructional Leadership, Secondary School, Madan, Education

Introduction

Education, a key to peace and success has a significant contribution to the advancement of any country as confirmed by the Pakistans Education Policy (2017). Nobody can disagree with the statement, however, this is possible only through effective institutions. According to Ali (2017), secondary institutions are more important in ensuring such development. But disappointingly Pakistan is still hosting the world's Largest Unskilled population. On the

other side, a report published by the World Economic Forum cited by the Human Capital Report (2017) states that Pakistan has one of the worse education systems and the reason is that Pakistan spends only 2% of the GDP (I-Saps, 2015; Ali, 2017; Rahman, 2021). In such circumstances, Pakistan has not produced just a single research paper that significantly contributes to school improvement (Saleem et al., 2012; Niqab, 2016; Ali, 2017; Rahman, 2021).

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School improvement (SI) is an ongoing process towards school effectiveness (SE) significantly concentrating on students' academic outcomes and achievement of organizational ends (Bernhardt & Hebert, 2010). School improvement enhances students' potentialities and truly ensures students' career success through a well-defined mission (Hopkins, 2001). According to Stephanie, Lisa, Mary and Billie-Jo (2012), there must be a concept of teamwork among teaching staff, supporting staff and community to lead to visionary goals and confirm school improvement. Le Floch (2014) is of the view that school improvement can never be possible without principals' instructional role/leadership.

Numerous research studies have shown that principals' instructional leadership has countless contributions in translating organizational vision into reality and bringing developments (Hopkins 2001a; Van Velzen, Miles, Elholm, Hameyer, & Robin, 1985; West, Jackson, Harris & Hopkins, 2000). OFSTED (2000) also confirmed the significant instructional contribution to school improvement. Debevoise (1984) is of the view that instructional leadership refers to those actions that a school head delegates to others to achieve school targets. The true purpose of instructional leadership is to bring the school to the desirable track through effective instruction. Instructional leadership, also known as learning leadership or educational leadership concentrates on the fundamental responsibilities of a school like communicating the school mission, managing instructional programs and creating a positive learning climate (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Hallinger, 2010). Various research studies stress that school improvement without instructional leaders is just a dream (Yasil & Kaya, 2012).

Objectives of the Study

The key objective of the study was:

To determine the relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement at the secondary school level in district Mardan

Literature Review

School Improvement

The concept of school improvement was introduced in 1960. According to Reynolds et al., (2000), the school improvement concept went through different phases whereas currently, we are in the fourth phase and progressing towards the visionary educational change. Stephen (2019) is of the view that school is a product of change both inside and outside. According to Van Venzal et al., (2012), school improvement is the reflection of academic standards achievements, and such achievements are possible only in a situation if there is a well-established plan exists (Loeb & Plank, 2008). Students' holistic development, academic performance and achievements are directly linked with school improvement (Bernhardt & Hebert, 2010) whereas according to Hopkins (2001a), school improvement ensures all these changes only through effective educational approaches. School improvement is totally dependent on inspiring administration, teachers' professional standards and executing plans.

Nobody can deny the fact that in today's world school improvement is linked with teachers' competencies, students' attitudes towards school activities and management approach towards achieving school ends. The global education system is agreed that the major objective of any institution is heightening fruitful learning through accepted care (Stephanie, 2012). Following the stated concepts Harris and Chapman (2002) and Stephen (2019) believed that students' career success is confirmed through academic improvement. However, this cant be ignored that all such is possible only through effective principal instructional leadership.

Instructional Leadership

Early 1980s research on effective schools led to the development of the instructional leadership model. This model, in contrast to earlier ones, concentrated on how leadership enhanced educational outcomes (Steward, 2006). Holding principals accountable for school improvement is a major concern in today's world (Heck, 1992). Debevoise (1984) is of the

view that instructional leadership refers to the delegation of power to others (teachers) for ensuring school improvement. Instructional leadership confirms the smart teaching-learning process through mutual development (Lima, 2008).

The main goal of instructional leadership (IL) is to move the school toward its vision by providing insightful instruction. The facets of a principal's instructional leadership include communicating the school's mission, overseeing and controlling educational initiatives, and fostering a supportive learning environment (Hallinger, 2010).

Marsh (1992) holds the opinion that a principal is uniquely suited and related to the task of instructional leadership. It is solely concerned with promoting the teaching-learning process. In order to improve the pedagogical process for students' overall development, the principal's role also includes engaging teaching staff and support staff in constructive actions, resolving the triangular concerns of teachers, students, and parents, and keeping an eye on the overall school infrastructure in order to give encouraging feedback to concerned higher authorities. Hallinger (2003, 2009, & 2013) demonstrated these aspects of instructional leadership in the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS).

To summarize this discussion, instructional leaders are culture creators and goal-oriented individuals (Hallinger, 2009). Although there hasn't been much research on instructional leadership in Pakistan (Rizvi, 2010), the role of the principal in this area cannot be disputed (Yesil & Kaya, 2012). Without instructional

leadership, school improvement is nothing more than a pipe dream.

Methodology

Design of the Study

Keeping in consideration the philosophical bases, the correlational survey types research design (quantitative design) was followed to identify the relationship between principals' instructional leadership (IL) and school improvement (SI) at the secondary school level in the context of district Mardan. The basic theme of the study was to measure the relationships amongst variables (IL & SI) for which the correlational survey types design was best suggested by Creswell (2012). According to Macintyre (2014), the Quantitative correlational design is suitable in a situation where the researcher wants to measure the relationship between variables.

The Population of the Study

All the Government secondary school teachers (male/female) from the urban and rural divisions of district Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan constituted the population of this study. According to the annual statistic report of the public sector schools 2017-2018 of the elementary and secondary education department (E&SED) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan, there are a total of 167 secondary schools(boys & girls) in district Mardan where 2644 teachers (male & female) are working on various positions. The below tables demonstrate the details of these schools and teachers with respect to the rural and urban divisions in district Mardan.

Table 1

Parameter of the Study

S. No	Division	No of Schools		No Of Teachers	
		Boys Schools	Girls Schools	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
1	Rural	76	75	1357	905
2	Urban	11	05	273	109
3	Total	87	80	1630	1014
4	Grand Total	167		2644	

(Source: EMIS, 2017-2018)

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

In reflection of the nature of the population, the stratified random sampling technique was considered best for choosing respondents. According to Chua (2011), Ali (2017) and Rahman (2021) stratified Random sampling is a suitable technique for selecting respondents from various groups. For finalizing the sample size, the researcher utilized the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. According to the table, the sample size for the gender population (2644) is 335 whereas for the school population (167) is 118.

Research Instrument

The data was collected from the stated schools' teachers through a close-ended seven (7) points (Never, Almost Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Frequently, Almost Always, Always) and five (05) point Likert scale tool (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) comprising of two main parts (Instructional Leadership & School Improvement) consisting on 39 items.

Data Collection Procedures

The present study was conducted by the researcher personally from the public sector

Table 2

Relationship between Principals' Instructional Leadership (IL) and School Improvement (SI) (N=335)

(IL) (SI)	DSM	MIP	CSLC	Total (IL)
NCG	.753 **	.735**	.759**	
SAA	.677**	.785**	.799**	
SOE	.801**	.795**	.780**	
Total (SI)				0.679**

$\rho^{**} < 0.01$, $\rho^* < 0.05$ (Sig: 2-Tailed), ** indicate significance

The above value ($\rho = .679$, $\rho < 0.01$) evidently indicates a strong and significant positive correlation between the principals' instructional leadership and school improvement. The table further demonstrates a clear and remarkable correlation between both variables.

The national curriculum goals (NCG) have a strong and significant relationship with the

secondary school teachers of district Mardan by keeping all the ethical considerations in mind.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis was done by means of Pearson r correlation. The Pearson r correlation is represented by ρ and has a value range from -1 to +1. The + (plus) and - (minus) signs show the worth of the relationship/direction between variables. The value from 0 to 0.29 \pm shows a weak correlation, the value from 0.30 to 0.49 shows a moderate correlation whereas the value from 0.50 to 1.00 shows a strong correlation (Cohen, 1988).

Interpretation of Data

The interpretation of data was done through correlation statistics b using SPSS V-26 in reflection of research questions (Is there a significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement at secondary school level in district Mardan) and hypothesis (There is no significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement at secondary school level in district Mardan) in below table.

defining school mission (DSM) ($\rho = 0.753$, $\rho < 0.01$), managing instructional program (MIP) ($\rho = 0.735$, $\rho < 0.01$) and creating a positive school learning climate (CSLC) ($\rho = 0.759$, $\rho < 0.01$).

The student's academic achievements (SAA) has also a strong and significant-positive relationship with the defining school mission (DSM) ($\rho = 0.677$, $\rho < 0.01$), managing

instructional program ($\rho = 0.785, \rho < 0.01$) and creating a positive school learning climate ($\rho = 0.799, \rho < 0.01$).

Additionally, the sequence of events (SOE) has also a strong and significant-positive relationship with the defining school mission (DSM) ($\rho = 0.801, \rho < 0.01$), managing instructional program (MIP) ($\rho = 0.795, \rho < 0.01$) and creating a positive school learning climate (CSLC) ($\rho = 0.780, \rho < 0.01$).

Findings

The study evidently showed that all the dimensions of principals' instructional leadership (Defining School Mission-DSM, Managing Instructional Program-MIP & Creating Positive School Learning Climate-CSLC) have a strong and positive-significant relationship with all the dimensions of school improvement (Sequence of Events-SOE, Students' Academic Achievements-SAA & National Curriculum Goals-NCG).

The current finding verified that the research question (*Is there a significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement at the secondary school level in district Mardan?*) by presenting a strong and positive-significant correlation between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement and strongly rejected the hypothesis (*There is no significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school improvement at secondary school level in district Mardan*).

Discussion

The current findings regarding the defining school mission and sequence of events are similar to the results of Kampen (2019). According to Kampen (2019) through clear communication school mission events are sequentially channelized which results in school improvement and ensures students'

career success as well. The results of the national curriculum goals are consistent with the results of James et al (2011). The study further says that Students' academic achievements are linked with explicit school mission. The study conducted by Ali (2018) also verified that Students' academic achievements mainly focused on clear objectives that are communicated by an academic leader. The study of Rahman (2021) is also similar to the current findings in reflection of students' academic achievements.

The statistical conclusion of Brand et al., (2008), Chen & Weikart (2008), Collin and Parson (2010) and Rahman (2021) regarding instructional leadership and school improvement are consistent with the findings of this study by concluding their arguments that positive school setup has an everlasting impact of students performance. The findings of the study further clarified that students can show maximum scholastic achievements if the instructional programs are properly managed by the leader. The results of Halawah (2005), Hallinger (2010) and Day et al., (2010) are similar to the results of this study. The researcher noticed a strong correlation between managing instructional programs and national curriculum goals. The school leader can easily attain institutional goals and ensure school improvement while controlling instructional programs.

Conclusion

In reflection of the arguments discussed it is evidently clear that principals' instructional leadership has a strong significant relationship with the school improvement. This is concluded from the findings of the present study, that school improvement could be ensured only in a situation where there is a clear communication of institutional mission, if the programs are properly planned and managed and if there is a pleasant educational environment present.

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