

Comparison between Perceived Leadership Style of Headteachers and Their Practices

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Abstract

A person who influences other people to achieve the specific objectives of an organization is a leader. While leadership is a process in which a leader influences socially to achieve the organizational goals and asks for subordinates to participate voluntarily for the purpose. The most accepted and commonly used leadership styles in secondary schools autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. It is proved that the democratic style of leadership is very useful to make the organization successful. But some of the cases are observed that head teachers use autocratic style to run an institute. They perceive that they follow the democratic style but on the other hand, their practices showed a different picture. This situation demands to be investigated that whether their perceived style matches their practices. This study is conducted to achieve the objectives *i.e.*, to find out secondary school teachers and head teachers' perceptions about heads' leadership style and the difference between head teachers' perceived style and their practices. A survey method was used to conduct this descriptive type of study. All secondary schools of city Gujrat were the population while forty secondary schools were randomly selected from these schools as a sample of the study. All head teachers and 3 teachers from each selected school were part of the sample. The total sample consisted of 40 heads and 120 teachers. Two questionnaires were constructed to collect the data from head teachers and teachers. Respondents were asked to rate their responses on five points Likert scale. Questionnaires were validated through expert opinion. CVI of both the questionnaires was .83. Cronbach Alpha of the instrument for head teachers was .70 and .77 of the instrument for teachers. It was concluded that the democratic style of leadership was perceived by the head teachers. The perception of teachers about their heads' leadership style was the same. There was a significant difference between the perceptions of head teachers and teachers regarding the autocratic leadership style of head teachers.

Key Words; Leadership, autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire

Introduction

To achieve the specific objectives, a person who delegates or influences other people is a leader [1]. Similarly, Clark (1997) [2] states that if an individual is a teacher leader then society trusts upon him and people will rise to respect him. In the same way Naris & Ukpere (2012) [3]

opined that through conducting training, coaching and counseling he should boost up the morale and spirit of the people in the institution to be a powerful motivator.

The labels used to define this field have changed from 'educational administration' to 'educational management', and, more recently, to 'educational leadership' [4]. In England, this shift is exemplified most strongly by the opening of the National College for School Leadership in 2000, described as a 'paradigm shift' by Bolam (2004) [5]. The definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective [6]. According to Drath and Palus (1994) [7], leadership is a process in which sense is developed for the achievement of a common goal. As a result of this sense of doing work together, people will understand and be more committed to the achievement of specific goals. Moreover, House (1999) [8] defined leadership as the ability of a person to influence, motivate, and facilitate others to take part in an organizations' effectiveness and success.

Involvement of teachers and the professionals related to education by following a systematic plan for the improvement of the educational program and better outcomes. Many leadership styles are adopted by the leaders *i.e.*, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, pedagogical leadership, charismatic leadership, *etc.* But the most accepted and commonly used leadership styles by secondary school headteachers are Autocratic, Democratic, and Laissez-Faire leadership style. Contingency theory helps in identifying the situational variables that lead to determining the most appropriate leadership style according to the circumstances [9]. In the coming years the foundation of many approaches that were followed later on was provided by [10]. He developed his framework and advocated that many of the leadership styles, there are three major styles *i.e.*, Autocratic, Democratic, and Laissez-Faire leadership styles.

The leader decides without consulting his team regardless of the user input by the team in an autocratic leadership style. This leadership style may be fruitful; when a leader has to decide without any delay when input by the team members is not needed, and team agreement is not mandatory for the successful product. On the other hand, this leadership style has its drawbacks as demoralization of the team members, absenteeism and staff turnover may be at a high level.

Democratic leaders make the final decisions with the consultation of their team members. Moreover, a democratic leader normally avoids taking arbitrary orders and decisions because he regards the feelings of their followers that they are the partner in progress [11]. The team of the democratic leader is highly engaged in different projects and decision-making processes as

well. The creativity of the team is also encouraged by the democratic leader. Resultantly, team members show a high job satisfaction level and highly productive. This leadership style may be ineffective when decisions have to be made quickly. Kojo (2001) However, in conflict management and resolution, the democratic leader plays its role by employing consultation, dialogue, arguments, compromise as authentic tools for achieving a stable and enduring harmony within the system [12].

Laissez-Faire is an approach that leads to the concept of no leadership and is based on no interaction between the leader and his followers [13]. In the Laissez-Faire leadership style, team members have the freedom of setting deadlines and working styles. The Laissez-Faire leaders avoid taking any responsibility; they delay the decisions, do not give feedback, and do not take any interest to meet the needs of the followers [14,15]. Leaders have no concern about the needs and developments of followers. They avoid interfering in employees working.

It has its merits and demerits. The job satisfaction of the employees may be at its peak but the situation becomes alarming because employees may not be proficient in working effectively. This situation may occur when a leader has less control over work and his employees as well.

It is proved that the democratic style of leadership is very useful to make the organization successful. But some of the cases are observed that headteachers use autocratic style to run an institute. They perceive that they follow the democratic style but on the other hand, their practices showed a different picture. This situation demands to be investigated that whether their perceived style matches their practices or there is a contradiction between their perceived leadership style and their practices about the leadership style. Teachers' perceptions about headteachers' leadership style will be considered as the practices of headteachers.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study were;

1. To find out secondary school head teachers' perceptions about their leadership style?
2. To find out the practices of the secondary school headteachers regarding their leadership style? (secondary school teachers' perception of their headteachers' leadership style)
3. To find out the difference between school head teachers' perceived leadership style and their practices? (teachers' perception)

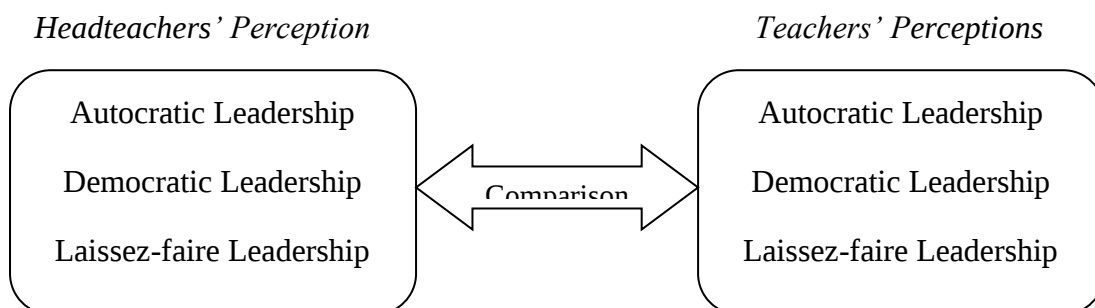
Research Questions of the study

This study was conducted to answer the following research questions.

1. Do secondary school headteachers' perceptions about their leadership style mean score significantly differ from scale mean score *i.e.* 3?
2. Do secondary school teachers' perceptions about their headteachers' leadership style mean score significantly differ from scale mean score *i.e.* 3?
3. Do headteachers and their teachers' perceptions about the autocratic leadership style of headteachers significantly differ at the secondary level?
4. Do headteachers and their teachers' perceptions about the democratic leadership style of headteachers significantly differ at the secondary level?
5. Do headteachers and their teachers' perceptions about the laissez-faire leadership style of headteachers significantly differ at the secondary level?

Research Methodology:

The nature of this study is descriptive. This study was conducted through survey method. A questionnaire was used to collect the information from the respondents.



Conceptual framework of the comparison between headteachers' perception and their practices about their leadership style

All secondary schools in the city Gujrat were the population of the study. All public, private, girls and boys' secondary schools were included in the population of this study.

A random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. Forty secondary schools were randomly selected from all secondary schools in the city Gujrat. All headteachers of these selected schools were taken as a sample to determine their leadership style while 3 teachers from each selected school were the part of the sample. The total sample consisted of 40 headteachers and 120 teachers. The detail of the sample is illustrated in the following table.

Table 1 Detail of Sample

Detail of Sample	Public Schools		Private Schools		Total
	Boys School	Girls Schools	Boys School	Girls Schools	
Headteachers	10	4	19	7	40
Teachers	30	12	57	21	120

Data was collected through a questionnaire. Two questionnaires were constructed for this study. One questionnaire for headteachers to determine their leadership style and the 2nd questionnaire was constructed for teachers working under the headship of the selected heads to find out the perception of teachers about their headteachers' leadership styles. Respondents were asked to rate their responses on five points Likert scale under these options; strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. There are three main leadership styles *i.e.*, Autocratic, Democratic, and Laissez-faire. Both the questionnaires were constructed under the umbrella of these three leadership styles. Against each leadership style, 6 items were formulated. So each questionnaire consisted of 18 items. Collected data were entered into SPSS 21 and were analyzed to answer the research questions of the study.

Both the instruments were validated through expert opinion. Five experts that have subject matter knowledge and command over item construction were chosen for opinion. Necessary changes were made under the light of the opinion given by these experts. CVI of both the questionnaires was .83. The reliability of the questionnaires was measured through SPSS 21. Cronbach Alpha of the instrument for headteachers was .70 while Cronbach Alpha of the instrument for teachers was .77.

A questionnaire for headteachers was distributed to the 40 headteachers of the selected secondary schools of city Gujrat. By following the research ethics, it was requested to the headteachers for filling the questionnaires and return it to the researcher. The second questionnaire for teachers was distributed to the teachers of the selected schools. Three teachers from each school were selected for the purpose. Teachers were requested to rate their responses and give their opinion. The rate of responses on both the questionnaires was 100%.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed. Data on both the questionnaires was entered into SPSS 21 making separate files. One file of SPSS 21 for the analysis of data collected from headteachers and other files for the responses taken from the teachers. Data was coded; strongly agree as 5, agree as 4, undecided as 3, disagree as 2, and strongly agree as 1.

Public schools were coded as 1 while private schools as 2. Similarly, male schools were coded as 1 whereas female schools were coded as 2. Items formulated on three leadership styles were computed separately and the Mean score was calculated through SPSS 21 to determine the leadership style of headteachers. On the other hand 2nd file comprising the data collected from teachers to find out the practices of the headteachers. Items on each leadership style were computed and Mean score was calculated. To find out the difference between the leadership style of the headteachers and their actual practices; t-test was applied.

Table 2 Analysis of Headteachers' perception of their leadership style

Leadership Style	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Autocratic Style	40	3.49	0.60
Democratic Style	40	4.16	0.42
Laissez-faire	40	3.14	0.58

Table 2 describes that the highest Mean score (M=4.16, SD=0.42) among three leadership styles stated that headteachers of secondary schools adopt the democratic style of leadership. While the Mean score of 3.49, SD=0.60 demonstrates that they often adopt the autocratic style to run the institutes.

Table 3 Analysis of teachers' perception of their headteachers' leadership style

Practices	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Autocratic Style	120	3.78	0.52
Democratic Style	120	3.92	0.72
Laissez-faire	120	3.45	0.62

Table 3 demonstrates that the highest Mean score (M=3.92, SD=0.72) stated that teachers responded that their headteachers mostly use democratic style whereas it is obvious from (M=3.78, SD=0.52) that headteachers also adopt the autocratic style to achieve the goals of the institutes. Headteachers adopt a leadership style according to the situation.

Table 4 Comparison between perceptions of headteachers' Mean score and Scale Mean score

Leadership Style	N	Mean	S.D	Mean Difference	t-value	df	Sig. 2-tailed
Autocratic	40	3.49	.60	.491	5.17	39	.000

Democratic	40	4.16	.42	1.16	17.41	39	.000
Laissez-faire	40	3.14	.58	.145	4.57	39	.124

One sample t-test was applied to compare the mean score of perceptions of headteachers with the scale mean score *i.e.*, 3. Analysis of data against autocratic leadership style shows that t-value of autocratic style 5.17 with df 39 is significant as $p\text{-value} = .000 < \alpha = 0.05$. Similarly, analysis of data on the democratic style of leadership of secondary school headteachers shows that the t-value of democratic style 17.41 with df 39 is significant as $p\text{-value} = .000 < \alpha = 0.05$. But data on laissez-faire leadership style t-value of laissez-faire leadership style of headteachers 4.57 with df 39 is insignificant as $p\text{-value} = .124 > \alpha = 0.05$.

Table 5 Comparison between teachers' perceptions Mean score and Scale Mean score

Leadership Style	N	Mean	S.D	Mean Difference	t-value	df	Sig. 2-tailed
Autocratic	40	3.78	.41	.78	12.02	39	.000
Democratic	40	3.96	.61	.96	9.95	39	.000
Laissez-faire	40	3.45	.50	.45	5.71	39	.000

One sample t-test was implied to compare the mean score of perceptions of teachers with the scale mean score *i.e.*, 3. Analysis of data against autocratic leadership style shows that t-value of autocratic style 12.02 with df 39 is significant as $p\text{-value} = .000 < \alpha = 0.05$. Similarly, analysis of data on the democratic style of leadership of secondary school headteachers, the perception of teachers shows that the t-value of democratic style 9.95 with df 39 is significant as $p\text{-value} = .000 < \alpha = 0.05$. Analysis of data on laissez-faire leadership style of headteachers, the perception of teachers with t-value of the laissez-faire leadership style of headteachers 5.71 with df 39 is also significant as $p\text{-value} = .000 < \alpha = 0.05$.

Table 6 Comparison between the perception of headteachers and their teachers about headteachers' leadership styles

Leadership Style	Mean		S.D		Mean Difference	df	t-value	Sig.
	Head Teacher	Teacher	Head Teacher	Teacher				
Autocratic	3.49	3.78	.60	.41	.296	78	2.56	.015
Democratic	4.16	3.96	.42	.61	-.203	78	-1.72	.069
Laissez-faire	3.14	3.45	.58	.50	.306	78	2.51	.188

An independent samples t-test was applied to compare the perception of headteachers and teachers about autocratic leadership style of headteachers. There was significant difference between the head teacher ($M = 3.49$, $S.D. = .60$) and teachers' scores ($M = 3.78$, $S.D. = .41$); $t(78) = 2.56$, $p = .015 < \alpha = .05$. Furthermore comparison between the perceptions of headteachers and teachers regarding democratic leadership style show no significant difference between the headteachers ($M = 4.16$, $S.D. = .42$) and teachers scores ($M = 3.96$, $S.D. = .61$); $t(78) = -1.72$, $p = .069 > \alpha = .05$. Moreover comparison between the perceptions of the headteachers and teachers about Laissez-faire leadership style was made. It was found insignificant difference between the perception of headteachers ($M = 3.14$, $S.D. = .58$) and teachers scores ($M = 3.45$, $S.D. = .50$); $t(78) = 2.51$, $p = .188 > \alpha = .05$.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study show that secondary school headteachers perceive that they use a democratic style of leadership on priority to run the educational institute but they also use an autocratic style of leadership according to the situation when needed. When the perception of teachers about leadership styles of their headteachers was analyzed; it was found that secondary school headteachers use a democratic leadership style to run the schools. They also practice an autocratic leadership style when needed. There was found a significant difference between the perception of headteachers and the scale mean *i.e.*, 3 regarding autocratic and democratic leadership style while an insignificant difference was found between perceptions of headteachers and scale mean *i.e.*, 3 regarding Laissez-Faire style of leadership. Findings of analysis of data on the perception of teachers about their headteachers' leadership style; it was found a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and the scale mean *i.e.*, 3 regarding autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership style of their headteachers. Moreover, a significant difference was found between the perceptions of headteachers and teachers regarding the autocratic leadership style of headteachers while no significant difference was found between the perceptions of headteachers and teachers regarding democratic and laissez-faire leadership style.

Recommendations

It is evident from research studies that secondary school headteachers' leadership style has a major contribution in achieving the educational goals and objectives. So headteachers should apply leadership style according to the situation. Situational variables are best identified through Contingency theories of leadership and management. Headteachers may also know

these theories to identify the circumstances of an organization. That knowledge can be inculcated through induction training.

This study concludes that secondary school headteachers use a democratic leadership style the most. Based on their subservient leadership style it is suggested to improve the least used leadership styles through professional training because the leader has to use more than one leadership style to achieve the objectives of an organization.

It was concluded through this study that there is a significant difference between headteachers' perception and teachers' perception. It is recommended that the character building of headteachers should be ensured during training, workshops, and refresher courses so that the difference in their sayings and practices should be minimized.

The conclusion of the study showed a significant difference between the perceived leadership style of headteachers and their practices. A study may be conducted for the future to probe whether awareness about leadership style is being focused during induction training of headteachers.

The conclusion of the study showed a significant difference between the perceived leadership style of headteachers and their practices so it is suggested to probe this difference through a qualitative study.

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