

## **A Study of Leadership Styles of Female Elementary School Principals in Rawalpindi Pakistan**

\* Fatima Saddique, MPhil Scholar (Corresponding Author)

\*\* Dr. Bushra Inayat Raja

### **Abstract**



*The research investigated the leadership styles of the female school principals. The population was 32 elementary school principals in total in Rawalpindi city of Pakistan. The quantitative research design was utilized by the researchers. For the data collection, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used. It was Leadership styles questionnaire 5X rater developed by Northouse in 2008. It was used to measure the Democratic Leadership Style, Authoritarian Leadership Style, and Laissez faire leadership Style. Descriptive and statistical methods were used to analyse the data. The results showed that among the total of 22 school principals, 16 were practicing democratic leadership style, 4 school principal were practicing authoritarian leadership style, 1 female principal was practicing both democratic and authoritarian leadership style and further, 1 school principal was practicing laissez-faire leadership style. Moreover, the results showed that the leadership style that is emerging as the most popular leadership style among the female school principals as compared to the authoritarian and laissez faire leadership styles at elementary school level was democratic leadership styles. It was also confirmed that the female school principals were democratic leaders.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles, Female Leaders, Elementary School Level

### **Introduction**

Many schools have been confronting difficulties due to reforms, changes in their authorities at higher levels and authoritative designs, and restricting themselves to the local area impact which has made them more responsible to prove their norms for the substance and performance. It has presented numerous variations in teaching and learning methods. (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbech, 1999).

These challenges have carried changes to the school reforms. These changes are referred to as its concerns for change and adjustment of leadership in the schools as it has capacity with regards to rebuilding good instructive relationship among teachers, trainers, and principals in the changing and unplanned nature of the school changes. It won't just lead to development in that frame of mind of the teacher but additionally give them an opportunity to answer decidedly to the change program (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbech, 1999).

As far as leadership is concerned, according to Glynn & DeJordy (2010) “it is a concept that can be vague and misunderstood. It has been theorized as a process of change”. Cragg & Spurgeon, (2007) also asserted that it is very difficult to define leadership due to the diversity and complexity in which it can be defined. Leadership could be described as a person’s official position in an institution, the power to direct the followers, and also it is an attempt or an act of directing (Merriam-Webster, 2012)

Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013) stated Leadership is about handling and affecting individuals so they might have the courage to work towards the accomplishment of their objectives. A lot of research studies have been conducted on leadership practices that found, leadership practices are important for effective organization (Lussier and Achua, 2015).

Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013) viewed that Leadership is as a subtle way of impacting the believers to work eagerly to accomplish the put forth objectives of the institute. Overall, the literature review shows that strong leadership styles and the execution of these leadership styles are extremely important to make a sound administrative system (Lussier and Achua, 2015).

House (1976) stated that due to leadership style of leaders’ followers may feel satisfied or unsatisfied with their work. The leadership style of a leader depends on the leaders’ personal qualities.

\* Department of Education, Virtual University, Lahore Pakistan. Email: [fatimasaddique@gmail.com](mailto:fatimasaddique@gmail.com)

\*\* PhD in Leadership and Management from UCL Institute of Education. University of London, UK.  
Email: [bushra\\_edu@hotmail.com](mailto:bushra_edu@hotmail.com)

Which may help to make a good impression of the leader on followers. This good impression about leader may result in a positive change in the institution. Moreover, This change will result in change in the follower's behaviour and actions, which sequentially may increase the followers' job satisfaction and good performance (Grosso, 2008).

In this study, "leadership style" refers to the way of interaction or attitude that they exert to direct, regulate, and promote interactions and activities in a school. The following leadership styles (democratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire) further have been studied to find out leadership styles the questionnaire items map these three leadership styles (Gunter, 2001).

A lot of study and investigation has been done in a number of fields, including both business and education to understand the term leadership. The principal of the institution is the main person who possess authority to practice leadership in the institution. Leadership styles of the principal have an impact on the culture and learning environment in the schools. It has been discussed in a number of significant academic articles (Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett, 2006).

As stated by Bogler (2005), the leadership style of the school principal has a significant impact on the school's climate, the staff's attitudes, and the academic performance of the learners. Teachers' satisfaction and students' academic performance significantly improve under principals who can adapt to changing situations (Daughtery, Kelley, & Thornton, 2005). Success at the school level frequently depends on how well principals exercise their leadership (Gerhardt, 2004).

In schools, the principal assumes this leadership role in order to oversee daily operations and implement improvement strategies to keep the change processes going. Since school principals must engage with a larger group of people while implementing new reforms inside schools, they are regarded as the gatekeepers of change (Fullan, 2001). Additionally, educational policy makers are persuaded that the principal is the most important person in a student's academic success (Murphy, 1990). Because of this, the principal exhibits irrational behavior.

Day (2004) claims that the principal of the school performs several functions at various times. He or she serves in multiple roles during the day, including manager, administrator, instructional leader, pedagogical leader, curriculum leader, and coach. It is clear from the literature's perspectives; A principle is the essential individual with the authority to use a variety of leadership styles to start and manage the improvement process.

An autocratic leaders have a controlling behaviour in his office. He directs his employees and force them to do the task as directed. It affects the employee's creativity and stops them from innovativeness. They did not communicate with the employees openly. They have a formal interaction and it is in written form only. Further, in this leadership style the top position on the hierarchy is for leaders and the lowest position is for staff (Khuong, & Hoang, 2015).

In autocratic leadership staff members contribution is not valued and they deal the staff members differently. The staff members did not enjoy the feeling of participation (George, 2017). Autocratic leadership sets all the rules and regulations and assigns specific work duty to each employee (Choi, 2007). Dawson (2002) concluded that in a short time duration the autocratic style results in outstanding performance. But in the long term the excessive use of authoritative style will destroy productivity. Further people will be fed up and disappointed and leave the hard work and boring work without creativity and innovation will result in demotivation.

The leadership style in which leader abdicates responsibility, hands off making decisions, provides minimal feedback, and pays less attention to helping subordinates meet their requirements to perform a task is called laissez-faire leadership style. (Avolio et al., 1999; Northouse, 2010).

A laissez-faire leader provides less direction to their employees. They do not have a controlling attitude. They have confidence on their people. They believe people would be successful, if they will work on their tasks in their own ways. It is also defined as a participative leadership style. Further, in this leadership style the leader has no part in decision-making. This is the primary cause of this leadership style's lowest output across all (Chris, 2015).

Laissez-faire leadership provides all demanded facilities to their employees but on the other hand, do not get interfere in employee work. This leadership style could work well if the leader gives advice to the employees frequently based on results (Ololube, 2013).

Laissez-faire leadership decides freedom according to institution objectives, practices, and principles. Zervas and Lassiter (2007) explained Laissez-faire style as the most effective style, especially when employees are experienced and ambitious.

Describing the democratic leadership style as an important approach, Sauer (2011) stated democratic leadership affects leadership and employee by letting the leader and employees to support one another.

McNamara (1999) noted that democratic leaders let their teams choose who will handle whatever task and how it will be done. He added further, A competent democratic leader, fosters participation and intelligently delegated authority while never lose sight of the fact that he carries the primary responsibility of leadership. Supporting this concept, Democratic leaders should keep an eye on what is going on in the institution under his leadership. So, the employees do not use a lot of time on decision making (Mills, 2007).

Democratic leaders use the knowledge, expertise, and ideas of his employees. However, they make the final decision. They care about the people that will be affected by the decisions that is the reason they did not make most important decision without consultation. This leadership style results in improvement of the employee's performance in work projects (Kirega, 2006).

Debashis (2000) acknowledged democratic leaders increases the motivation to staff members by organizing meetings for the institution or department, preparing individuals for leadership roles, and performance for institution tasks. It helps them to complete work effectively and meet organizational goals, to provide required outputs. Further, it also develops the problem-solving power in employees. This attitude allows the employees to make relations based on trust (Bell and Mjoli, 2014).

According to Woods (2005), understanding how society will understand how to improve schools requires a grasp of both the theory and practice of democracy and democratic leadership. The democratic and distributive leadership style is viewed in several other research studies as a potent variable for influencing the instructors and producing better results. According to Green (2000), it is crucial to keep in mind that principals must demonstrate trust in their teachers by distributing leadership responsibilities and by giving them opportunities to participate in the activities. In contrast, some scholars, including Goodsworth (1998) and McNamara (1999), contend that the democratic leadership style is frequently overly democratic and prevents collective progress.

Goleman (2000) argues that the authoritarian leadership style is often viewed as the converse of the democratic leadership style. It has the most impact on the environment of organizations. Alam (2012) recommends democratic leadership style while exploring the contextual realities in Pakistani contexts, highlighting that the success of various initiatives is achieved when the principal delegate tasks for teachers, boost their self-esteem, use a participatory approach, and assign the tasks to teachers after their willingness to participate in various activities.

Gentilucci and Muto (2007) stated these leadership styles, aid principals in scheduling their time to concentrate on matters that affect student progress. Consequently, it is apparent that the principal is held responsible for improvement of teaching and learning process. The attitude of all members of school depends on school principal. Further, A school principal is responsible for job satisfaction, effectiveness, staff dedication, school improvement, a welcoming environment, a culture of collaboration in the classroom, and high teacher morale (Fullan, 2002)

In their study, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) came to the conclusion that the principal's leadership style might either have a favorable or negative impact on the success of the students.

Kanwar (2000) suggests that in order to address this, principals should concentrate on the most recent strategies for school leadership. He views a visionary leadership style as a crucial element in assisting educators. The perspectives presented in literature on different leadership approaches have been presented in the aforementioned paragraphs. When leadership styles are examined, it becomes evident that effective leadership is necessary for any school to succeed and to promote higher achievement.

In order to increase teachers' job satisfaction, performance, and dedication, schools clearly require strong leaders who are proactive in their attitude and actions. Even if different researches support different leadership styles, it appears that no one leadership style can be universally regarded as the most effective strategy. Schools face a variety of difficulties, and leaders must choose the right strategy to address each one. It is a truth that a particular leadership style may prove successful in a given situation but may fail in another. The crucial factor is that knowledgeable leaders must be aware of the problem. They also need to support their colleagues' views by being adaptable enough to accept

criticism. Further, they must take the provided feedback as a tool for improving their professional performance and make the necessary adjustments to their leadership style. In conclusion, significant changes that are related to teaching and learning processes need to be made in schools. The leadership styles must be identified that are in practice by school principals.

This study tends to explore which leadership styles are being practiced by the female school principals in federal government school in Rawalpindi. It will help to identify which leadership style among three leadership styles democratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire are being practiced in schools at elementary level. It is expected that result of the research will add in knowledges about the elementary school female principal about their preferred leadership styles at elementary level.

### **Significance of Research**

This study is very significant in nature as it is hoped that it will help the school leaders to understand the importance of good leadership style. As the supportive leadership styles are the main ingredient to develop a conducive teaching and learning environment to provide better results in term of students' good performance. It is also hoped that the findings of the study can be useful to carry on further research in this field and subsequently to propose changes for the development of leadership in schools. This study can be of interest to the policy makers and principals of other Pakistani schools in general, to reflect and critique the current leadership styles and to improve them.

In the long run overall, this research might help the schools perform better. Additionally, the study may give a chance to compare and contrast studies of a similar nature from other international contexts and to investigate how country context and culture affect the selection of leadership styles.

### **Research Objectives**

The research objectives of the current study were as follows:

1. To investigate the different leadership styles, exercised by the federal government elementary school principals in Rawalpindi.
2. To investigate which leadership style was generally being exercised by the federal government elementary school principals in Rawalpindi.

### **Research Questions**

The study was directed by the following research questions:

1. What are the different leadership styles exercised by the federal government elementary school principals in Rawalpindi?
2. Which leadership style is being exercised by the majority of the federal government elementary school principals in Rawalpindi?

### **Theoretical Frame work**

The quantitative research framework is mostly used in social science to generate knowledge to observe the variables influencing individuals. Quantitative research is based on the collected data from the sample population to examine questions (Allen, 2017). Quantitative research is used in social sciences to collect numeric data. Some of the numeric data that helps researchers to do statistical analyses calculate percentages of numerical data and show relationships among the research variables. Questionnaires, observations and experiments etc are included in Quantitative research methodologies. (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

The researcher used a quantitative method for this research. In quantitative research method descriptive research method is used. "*It answers the questions like what, who, where, how and when*" (Khanzode, 1995). A questionnaire is used to collect data from research sample. The reasons behind using questionnaire were as follows

1. The data collection through Questionnaires are unbiased so it is preferred for quantitative research (Wysong, 2000).
2. Questionnaires are helpful for general findings (Hartford, 2000).
3. Questionnaire provide quantitative data.
4. It enables to complete study in a time.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research design**

The researchers used quantitative research design in this research. (Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Williams, 2011) In order to obtain results, a quantitative research design deals with quantifying numerical data and analysing variables. It involves the utilization of numerical data and its analysis using particular statistical techniques to respond to questions such as who, how much, what, where, when, how many,

and how, to learn more about this definition," Quantitative research methods, according to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), are used to explain a problem or phenomenon by collecting data in numerical form and analysing it.”

**Population**

All elementary school principals of Federal Government Elementary Institutions Cantt Garrison Rawalpindi city of Pakistan were target population of this study. Rashid (2004) “*stated elementary education in Pakistan is spread over a period of five years that starts at the age of five and ends at ten*” (p. 104).

**Sample and sampling techniques**

In the study the non-probability sampling technique was used for the collection of data. In the non-probability, sampling method the convenience sampling technique was used.

A sample of 22 participant female principals was taken from 32 elementary schools of Federal Government Elementary Institutions Cantt Garrison Rawalpindi city of Pakistan. A list of all elementary schools was taken from the office of the federal directorate of education (FDE) Rawalpindi.

**Data Collection Tools**

The study used a descriptive survey method and included a quantitative approach with closed-ended questions to find out the leadership styles being practiced by the elementary school principals.

**Data Collection Instrument**

The Leadership styles Questionnaire, 5x rater form, developed by Northouse in 2008, was selected to find out the principals’ leadership styles. The leadership styles questionnaire comprised of 18 items of which 6 were related to the democratic leadership styles and 6 were related to authoritarian leadership styles and the other 6 were related to laissez-faire leadership styles.

**Data Analysis**

To find out the results of the study, questionnaire items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Data was analysed by using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version after the data gathering process was complete. This software was used to find out the frequencies and percentages of responses.

In order to measure Authoritarian, Democratic and Laissez-faire leadership style. The questionnaire developed by Northouse (2009) was used. The questionnaire have specified six items against each leadership style. The Score for each leadership style were calculated by summing up the specified items. For example: to find out score for Authoritarian leadership, the responses from items 1, 2, 6, 10, 15 and 16 were summed up. To find out score for Democratic leadership style. The responses from items 4, 5, 8, 11, 14 and 18 were summed up. To find out score for laissez-faire leadership style, the responses from items # 3, 7, 9, 12, 13 and 17 were summed up. (Northouse, 2009). The rules to find out the range of leadership style scores were as follow:

- a) In any leadership style of the elementary school principal the score of 26 - 30 has been considered as a very high range in that leadership style.
- b) In any leadership style of the elementary school principal the score of 21-25 has been considered as a high range in that leadership style.
- c) In any leadership style of the elementary school principal the score of 16-20 has been considered as a moderate range in that leadership style.
- d) In any leadership style of the elementary school principal the score of 11-15 has been considered as a low range in that leadership style.
- e) Further, in any leadership style of the elementary school principal the score of 6-10 has been considered as a very low range in that leadership style.

The following tables show the scores of each school principal in leadership styles.

Table 1

*Leadership styles of school Principals*

School No	scores in authoritarian leadership styles of School Principals	Scores in Democratic Leadership School Principals	Scores in Laissez-faire Leadership styles of School Principals	Leadership styles of School Principals
1	19	23	20	Democratic
2	21	25	22	Democratic

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3	18	27	20	Democratic
4	20	28	21	Democratic
5	23	22	25	Laissez-faire
6	16	23	19	Democratic
7	19	23	19	Democratic
8	18	24	14	Democratic
9	15	24	18	Democratic
10	25	22	18	Authoritarian
11	16	23	21	Democratic
12	22	24	13	Democratic
13	21	28	14	Democratic
14	18	24	20	Democratic
15	13	21	11	Democratic
16	25	28	25	Democratic
17	23	15	14	Authoritarian
18	22	30	16	Democratic
19	27	12	9	Authoritarian
20	19	19	14	Democratic/Authoritarian
21	23	15	16	Authoritarian
22	21	26	18	Democratic

Table 2  
No of school Principals practicing each Leadership style

Leadership Styles	Principal
Democratic	16
Authoritarian	4
Laissez-fare	1
Democratic And Authoritarian	1

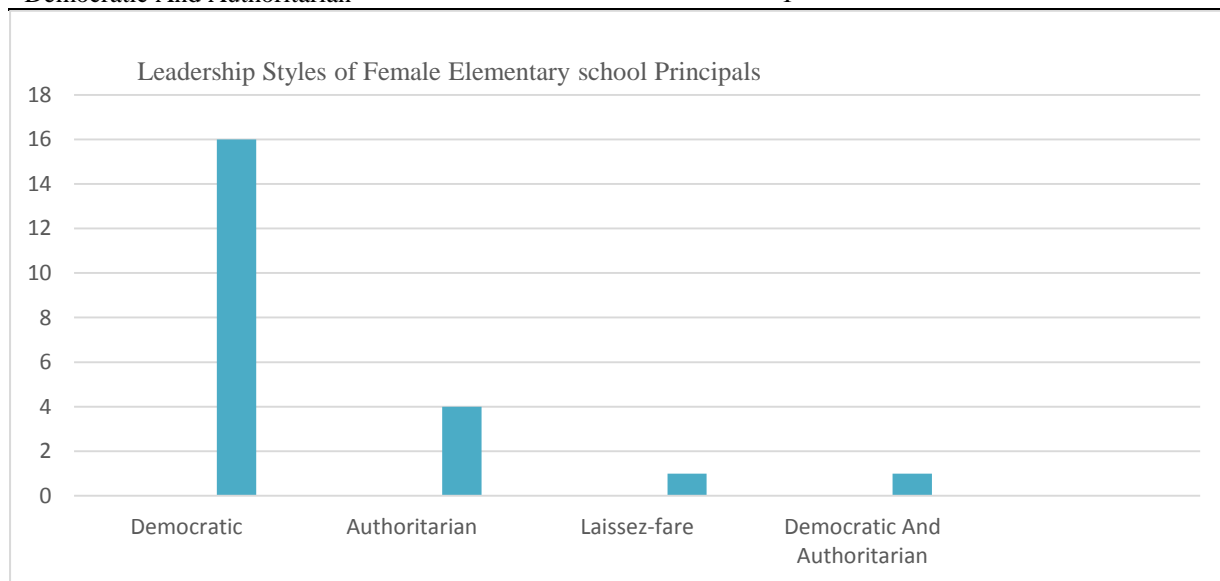


Figure 1: Shows the No of school Principals practicing each Leadership style

### Discussion and Conclusion

When the score of close-ended questionnaire concluded, the school principals who have a high score range of 21 – 30 in democratic leadership style were considered as democratic school principals. It was found the sixteen schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, school principals scored highest in democratic leadership style. They scored 23, 25, 27, 28, 23, 23, 24, 22, 23, 24, 28, 24, 21, 28, 30 and 26 in democratic leadership style, correspondingly Further, they scored 19,21 ,18, 20, 16, 19, 18, 15, 16, 22, 21, 18,13, 25, 22, 21 in authoritarian leadership style which were in range of 10 – 25 which was less than they scored in democratic leadership style. They scored 20, 22, 20, 21, 19, 19, 14, 18, 21, 13, 14, 20, 11, 25, 16, and 18 in Laissez-faire leadership style which was less than the scores in democratic leadership style.

The school principal of school no 20 scored 19 in both authoritarian and democratic leadership style. Which is highest score than laissez-faire leadership styles that is 14. In authoritarian

and democratic leadership style, she has a moderate range of 16 – 20. So, the school no 20 has a both authoritarian and democratic leadership style.

The school principals of four schools 10, 17, 19 and 21 scored 25, 23, 27, and 23, in authoritarian leadership style correspondingly. They scored highest in authoritarian leadership style. They have a high score range in authoritarian leadership style which is 21 – 25. However, their scores in democratic leadership style are 22, 15, 12 and 15 which are less than the authoritarian leadership style. They have a less score range in democratic leadership style than authoritarian leadership style.

The school principal of school no 5 scored 25 in laissez-faire leadership style and 23 in authoritarian leadership style, moreover 22 in democratic leadership style respectively. The highest score range was 21 – 25 in laissez-faire leadership style.

The results have shown that sixteen schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 22, principals have a democratic leadership style and the school principals of school 20 has both authoritarian and democratic leadership style. Therefore, the principals of schools 10, 17, 19 and 21 have authoritarian leadership styles and the principals of school 5 has a laissez-faire leadership style. The results have concluded that democratic leadership style has been practiced by majority of female school principals.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations have been made:

1. It is proposed that training should be provided to the school principals for polishing their leadership styles.
2. Programs should be developed for school principals to increase their knowledge about leadership style.
3. The leadership development programs should be run by the concerned authorities on permanent basis to help the principals in growing their skills and qualities as a school leader.
4. It is also suggested that the further research should be conducted as a comparative study between public and private sector, to find out which sector is exercising what leadership style.

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