

A STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine principals' leadership styles and student achievements in Matriculation Examination in public secondary schools in Bago (West) Region. Quantitative method design was used in this study. The sample of 52 principals and 1551 teachers were selected by using purposive sampling. A set of instruments for principals' leadership styles questionnaire and student achievements inventory was used to collect data. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were 0.73 for principals' leadership styles. The findings suggested that principals mostly practiced transactional leadership styles, followed by transformational leadership styles, and occasionally exhibited passive/avoidant leadership styles. Moreover, the findings suggested that the difference between principals' leadership types and student's achievement. The transformational leadership styles, transactional leadership styles, and passive/avoidant leadership styles are significantly different on student achievements as low pass rate schools, average pass rate schools and high pass rate schools.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Transformational Leadership Styles, Transactional Leadership Styles, Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles, Student achievements

Introduction

Education is the basic right of human beings. The National Education Strategic Plan (2016-2021) stated that "The purpose of Myanmar's national education system is to equip our students, youth and adult learners with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st century. In the coming years we must aspire to establishing an accessible, equitable and quality national education system that helps all our students and learners to discover their talents, realize their full potential and develop a passion for learning that lasts them throughout their lives (Education, National Education Strategic Plan (2016-2021))." In the summary of the National Education Strategic Plan (2021-2030), Dr. Nyunt Phay, Union Minister, Ministry of Education, stated that "Education is a major driver of development to enhance our social and economical capital" (Education, National Education Strategic Plan (2021-2030) Summary). The main aim of education is to develop the capacities dormant in human nature and to coordinate their expression for the enhancement and development of society, by equipping children with spiritual, moral and physical knowledge (Hussain, Salfi & Virk, 2014).

Before learning knowledge from a teacher, students can learn and get knowledge from parents, family members and peer group. So, the process of education begins at home. Nonetheless, the educational concept strongly associated with formal education occurs in school. The schools have a system to run the process of education. In this system, all persons have their roles and responsibilities. They need to play an imperative role in the success of the school (Dewey, 1986).

The principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. The principals are the most important person because they can carry on effectively to successful or achieve the school goals (Grissom, 2001). Leadership is the solution to the development and endurance of any organization whether it is an enterprise or institution. School leadership is a process of encouraging and serving teachers and learners to work passionately toward realization of educational aims (Ali & Dahie, 2015). Leadership is also essential for organizational innovation, and performance (John Antonakis & Robert J. House, 2014). So, principals need to have powerful leadership abilities to successfully lead the schools of the twenty-first century and address school improvement pressures.

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According to Bello, Ibi and Bukar (2016), achievement is measured by standardized achievement test developed for school subjects to meet national or state norm and in relation to what is attained at the end of a course. Then, they continued that all students in a school take the same coursework and defined student achievements in terms of test scores, examination results, and knowledgeable abilities.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to determine principals' leadership styles and student achievements in Matriculation Examination in public secondary schools in Bago (West) Region.

The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- (1) To find out the mostly practiced leadership styles in public secondary schools in Bago (West) Region.
- (2) To determine the difference between principals' leadership styles and student achievements.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study was concerned with to examine to determine principals' leadership styles and student achievements in Matriculation Examination in public secondary schools in Bago (West) Region. The study was based on the Full Range of Model of Leadership (Avolio, B. J. & Bass, B. M., 2004) to study principals' leadership styles. The styles in the Full Range of Model of Leadership are transformational leadership styles, transactional leadership styles, and passive/avoidant leadership styles.

Transformational leadership Style is founded around the promise and ability of group members. When transformational leaders expect high levels of organizational goals, they can accomplish the great capacities of those goals and great productivity (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). In educational environments, transformational leadership styles can be categorized into four areas: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). **Idealized influence** is a leadership style in which the leader builds trust within the organization and becomes a role model (Bass & Avolio, 1994). An idealized influence leader is highly admired by followers, and is respected and so, their accomplishments were fulfilled to complete mission (John J. Sosik & Dongli Jung, 2018). **Inspirational motivation** is a conduct that maximizes the performance of their followers by nurturing a shared mission and engages the followers to convey high expectations, and demonstrate a dedication to the goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994). **Intellectual stimulation** includes challenging the assumptions of followers' beliefs, their analysis of problems they face and solutions they generate, and motivating followers to get the effective approaches to do tasks (Bass & Avolio, 1994). **Individualized consideration** signifies as a coach or mentor that help followers reflect upon their practices and foster professional development (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and addresses the individual concerns and requirements of each follower (Gupta, M. V., & Mehta, S., 2019).

Transactional leadership Style recognizes what it is they want to get from their work and enhances rewards and promises of rewards for efforts (Bass, 1985). This style has two kinds: contingent reward and active management-by-exception. **Contingent reward** signifies a linear style of management, like the waterfall model (Bernard M. Bass & Ruth Bass, 2008). This leader has a habit to be good at setting goals, expectations and standards of an organization. They tend to provide constructive feedback concerning follower performance to improve their output (Bono & Judge, 2004). **Active management-by-exception** involve the leader watches and searches actively for deviations from rules and standards in order to avoid these deviations; if necessary, corrective actions are taken (Bass, 1985).

Passive/avoidant leadership style involves two kinds of styles such as passive management-by-exception and laissez-faire (Lewin, Lippit, & White (1939), cited in Olav Kjelleveold Olsen et al., 2021). **Passive management-by-exception** means that the leader waits

until the behavior has caused problems before taking action (Judge & Piccolo, 2004) and involves situations where the leader does not systematically address situations and problems (Kalkan, Ü. et al., 2020). **Laissez-faire** encourages no code regulation or law in an organization. Okumbe stated that the leader's symbol is that there is no authority and his/her primary role is to only supply resources needed by the group (Okumbe, 1998). He also pointed out that followers' decisions are easily accepted and followers can provide their own motivation and teachers and students can work freely to achieve the educational goals.

Definitions of Key Terms

Leadership Styles. Leadership styles are defined as the actions that the leaders prepare relevance to education in management, analysis educational problems and inspires professional progress and teaching improvement (Momoh & Osagie, 2014). These cover transformational leadership styles, transactional leadership styles, and passive/avoidant leadership styles (Northouse, 2015).

Transformational Leadership Styles. Transformational leadership styles refer to the actions through which leaders motivate followers by raising their consciousness about the importance of organizational goals, by cultivating the skills and potential of followers, and by inspiring them to transcend their own self-interest for organization (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Transactional Leadership Styles. Transactional leadership styles encompass actions wherein leaders provide followers with rewards on the fulfillment of the tasks, set up constructive engagement with followers, and stay action until their performance problems have occurred (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles. Passive/avoidant leadership styles refer to situations where the leader does not intervene to generate and implement of new ideas (Avolio, B. J. & Bass, B. M., 2004).

Student Achievements. Student achievements are narrowly mentioned as grades in a standardized tests to access whether students have acquired the skills and knowledge (Hattie, 2009).

Methodology

Research Method

Quantitative research design was used.

Participants of the Study

The sample of 52 principals and 1551 teachers in public secondary schools, Bago (West) Region, were selected by using purposive sampling method. The criterion is to select all of principals and teachers served at least three years in current schools.

Instrumentation

A set of instruments was developed based on Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bernard M. Bass & Bruce J. Avolio, 2000) to collect principals' leadership styles and student achievements inventory. It was comprised of 36 items for principals' leadership styles and 9 items for student's achievement inventory. All items used in this study were conducted in Myanmar language version. Then, expert review was conducted for validity of the instruments by the experts in the field of Educational Theory (current named as Educational Studies) from Patheingyi Education College (current named as Patheingyi Education Degree College). Next, some items were modified according to their suggestions and recommendations. After that, the pilot study was conducted with 60 teachers from two Public Secondary School in Bago (West) Region. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were 0.73 for principals' leadership styles.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were employed in this study.

Findings

Examining Principals' Mostly Used Leadership Styles Perceived by Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Bago (West) Region

Table 1 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Principals' Transformational Leadership Styles Perceived by Teachers (N=1551)

No.	Transformational Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Instilling pride for being associated with him/her	3.35	1.02	Moderate
2	Going beyond self-interest for the good of the group	3.80	0.64	High
3	Acting in ways that build others' respect	3.76	0.73	High
4	Displaying a sense of power and confidence	3.47	0.93	High
5	Talking about his/her most important values and beliefs	3.29	0.99	Moderate
6	Specifying the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	3.59	0.78	High
7	Considering the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	3.68	0.72	High
8	Keeping track of all mistakes	3.68	0.76	High
	Idealized Influenced	3.15	0.82	Moderate
9	Talking optimistically about the future	3.51	0.78	High
10	Talking enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	3.46	0.83	High
11	Articulating a compelling vision of the future	3.57	0.74	High
12	Expressing confidence that goals will be achieved	3.54	0.81	High
	Inspirational Motivation	3.52	0.79	High
13	Re-examining critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	3.10	0.95	Moderate
14	Seeking differing perspectives when solving problems	3.03	1.08	Moderate
15	Getting others to look at problems from many different angles	3.47	0.93	High
16	Suggesting new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	3.35	0.91	Moderate
	Intellectual Stimulation	3.24	0.97	Moderate
13	Spending time teaching and coaching	3.15	1.02	Moderate
14	Treating others as individuals rather than just as a member of a group	3.70	0.78	High
15	Considering an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others	3.57	0.88	High
16	Helping others to develop their strengths	3.47	0.83	High
	Individualized Consideration	3.47	0.88	High
	Transformational Leadership Styles	3.34	0.87	Moderate

Scoring 1.00-1.80=Very low, 1.81- 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 4.21-5.00=Very high

Direction: 1.81-2.60 =Low, 3.41-4.20=High,

According to the data in Table 1, teachers perceived that the mean value of inspirational motivation style was high as its mean value was 3.52, while those of other styles such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influenced were rated as moderate as their mean values were 3.47, 3.24 and 3.15. Overall, teachers indicated that the transformational leadership styles of their principals were rated as Moderate (Mean=3.34).

Table 2 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Principals' Transactional Leadership Styles Perceived by Teachers (N=1551)

No.	Transactional Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Providing others with assistance in exchange for their efforts	2.77	0.90	Moderate
2	Discussing in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets	3.41	0.71	High
3	Making clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved	3.47	0.87	High
4	Expressing satisfaction when others meet expectations	3.38	0.95	Moderate
	Contingent Reward	3.26	0.86	Moderate
5	Focusing attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards	3.40	0.91	Moderate

No.	Transactional Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Remark
6	Concentrating full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures	3.69	0.72	High
7	Keeping track of all mistakes	3.68	0.77	High
8	Directing attention toward failures to meet standards	3.40	1.12	Moderate
	Active Management-by-Exception	3.54	0.88	Moderate
	Transactional Leadership Styles	3.40	0.87	Moderate

Scoring 1.00-1.80=Very low, 1.81- 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 4.21-5.00=Very high
Direction: 2.60 =Low, 3.41-4.20=High,

As outlined in Table 2, teachers perceived that both contingent reward and active management-by-exception were moderate as their mean values were 3.26 and 3.54. Overall, teachers rated their principals' transactional leadership styles as moderate because its mean value was 3.40.

Table 3 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Principals' Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles Perceived by Teachers (N=1551)

No.	Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Failing to interfere until problems become serious	2.85	1.39	Moderate
2	Waiting for things to go wrong before taking action	1.52	1.50	Very low
3	Being a firm believer in "If it isn't broken, don't fix it."	3.60	0.81	High
4	Demonstrating that problems must become chronic before taking action	3.62	0.85	High
	Passive Management-by-Exception	2.90	1.14	Moderate
5	Avoiding getting involved when important issues arise	1.66	1.03	Very low
6	Being absent when needed	1.41	0.87	Very low
7	Avoiding making decisions	2.73	1.63	Moderate
8	Delaying responding to urgent questions	1.73	1.51	Very low
	Laissez-Faire	1.88	1.26	Low
	Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles	2.39	1.20	Low

Scoring 1.00-1.80=Very low, 1.81- 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 4.21-5.00=Very high
Direction: 2.60 =Low, 3.41-4.20=High,

As per the data in Table 3, teachers perceived that the mean value of passive management-by-exception was moderate (Mean=2.90) and that of laissez-faire was low (Mean=1.88). Overall, teachers rated their principals' passive/avoidant leadership styles as low (Mean=2.39).

Table 4 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Principals' Leadership Styles Perceived by Teachers (N=1551)

No.	Principals' Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Transformational Leadership Styles	3.34	0.87	Moderate
2	Transactional Leadership Styles	3.40	0.87	Moderate
3	Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles	2.39	1.20	Low

Scoring 1.00-1.80=Very low, 1.81- 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 4.21-5.00=Very high
Direction: 2.60 =Low, 3.41-4.20=High,

As indicated in Table 4, the teachers perceived that two kinds of styles out of three exhibited by principals, namely transformational and transactional leadership styles, were rated as moderate because their mean values were 3.34 and 3.40, while the remaining one, passive/avoidant leadership styles, was rated as low because its mean value was 2.39.

Examining Principals' Mostly Used Leadership Styles Perceived by Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Bago (West) Region

Table 5 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Principals' Leadership Styles Perceived by Principals (N=1551)

No.	Principals' Leadership Styles	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Transformational Leadership Styles	3.39	0.50	Moderate
2	Transactional Leadership Styles	3.48	0.55	Moderate
3	Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles	1.92	1.92	Low

Scoring **1.00-1.80=Very low, 1.81- 2.61-3.40=Moderate, 4.21-5.00=Very high**
Direction: **2.60 =Low, 3.41-4.20=High,**

As indicated in Table 5, the principals perceived that two kinds of styles out of three exhibited by principals, namely transformational and transactional leadership styles, were rated as moderate because their mean values were 3.39 and 3.48, while the remaining one, passive/avoidant leadership styles, was rated as low because its mean value was 1.92.

Table 6 Chi-square Analysis of Student Achievements Among Principals' Leadership Styles

Variable	n	School Types			Pearson Chi-square	p
		Low Pass Rate Schools	Average Pass Rate Schools	High Pass Rate Schools		
Transformational Leadership Styles	1551	786	248	517	37.28	<0.001
Transactional Leadership Styles	1551	786	248	517	67.05	<0.001
Passive/Avoidant Leadership Styles	1551	786	248	517	512.41	<0.001

According to the data in Table 6, transformational leadership styles, transactional leadership styles, and passive/avoidant leadership styles are significantly different on student achievements as low pass rate schools, average pass rate schools and high pass rate schools.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to the first specific objective, the findings showed that the mean value of principals' transformational leadership styles was moderate. The most common transformational leadership style of principals was inspirational motivation as its mean value was high. Then, the mean values of individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influenced were moderate. The leaders with inspirational motivation always concerned about the future and thus articulate the futuristic vision in the organization. Such leaders build strong image among their followers which is vital for the successful leadership (Bernard M. Bass & Ronald E. Riggio, 2005).

Then, the mean value for principals' transactional leadership styles was moderate. The principals performed active management-by-exception more than contingent rewards. This finding showed that the leaders recognize as a way to motivate followers and constantly monitor followers by rewards when they meet their goals. The leaders monitor followers to try to spot areas where they are performing tasks incorrectly, or where they are failing to meet performance standards (Joyce E. Bono & Timothy A. Judge, 2004).

According to the findings, the mean value for principals' passive/avoidant leadership styles was low. The principals performed passive management-by-exception more than laissez-faire. Laissez-faire style was the least common leadership style as compared to others. The leaders avoid changes and taking any initiative, and do not try to make improvements. The leaders steer away, avoid making decisions and getting involved, and are absent when needed (Olav Kjellevoid Olsen et al., 2001).

Based on these above findings, it was found that principals mostly practiced transactional leadership styles, followed by transformational leadership styles, and occasionally exhibited passive/avoidant leadership styles.

For the second specific objective, the transformational leadership styles, transactional leadership styles, and passive/avoidant leadership styles are significantly different on student achievements as low pass rate schools, average pass rate schools and high pass rate schools. The transformational leadership styles significantly different on student achievements as low pass rate schools, average pass rate schools and high pass rate schools, and the transactional leadership styles significantly different on student achievements as low pass rate schools, average pass rate schools and high pass rate schools, while the passive/avoidant leadership styles significantly different on student achievements as low pass rate schools, average pass rate schools and high pass rate schools.

According to the first specific objective, the findings showed that the mean value of principals' transactional leadership styles perceived by teachers and by principals was higher than other two styles. The mostly practiced transactional leadership styles focus on processes, control, and a strict management structure. The transactional leadership styles ensure that the goals and vision of the organization are achieved by giving the followers the rewards and punishments, and rely on established process and rules to ensure consistency and predictability in the organization (Bass, B. M., Avolio, B.J., Jung D. I. & Berson, Y., 2003). The principals who practiced transactional leadership styles emphasize the relationship with the follower, and focus on planning and execution (Timothy R Hinkin & Chester A Schriesheim, 2008).

In this leadership styles, every follower knows their roles and tasks. All facets of the departments are clearly defined from top to bottom for systematic performance. The transactional leadership treat the followers fairly and there is no favoritism. The system for giving rewards and punishments is clearly defined, and everyone knows what to expect. This creates a sense of fairness and helps to maintain a positive environment. This system also motivates the followers to perform at their best and maximize productivity (Liu, P., LuiL, L., Bo YL & Yang, H., 2023).

The transactional leaders provide immediate feedback and guidance on performance. This helps the followers stay on track and identify areas for improvement. Moreover, it any confusion and the followers know what action to take (John J Hater & Bernard M Bass, 1988). As the transactional leaders clearly define expectations and there are incentives for good performance, the followers are more satisfied and less likely to leave their jobs. The principals who practiced transactional leadership styles create a sense of fairness, easy-to-understand system, let the followers see their impact on the work (Bruce J Avolio, Bernard M Bass & Dong I Jung, 1999). The most common transactional leadership style of principals was active management-by-exception as its mean value was higher than contingent reward. Therefore, transactional leadership styles were the mostly used leadership style in public secondary schools in Bago (West) Region.

For the second specific objective, numerous factors that related to student achievements (Shoukat Ali et al., 2013). Student achievements are related to the parental role, the role of teacher, learning facilities, and school culture (Rahmat Fadhli et al., 2002). Student achievements are also related to the economic conditions, their habits for doing homework and for studying, their time management skills, their relationship within the family and their health conditions, and depend on the development of society and the increase of level of welfare (Munoz, M. A. cited in Mehmet Ozcan, 2021). The family has an impact on the students' way of thinking, belief, viewpoint and achievements and the family participation in students' activities which carried out at home also has that (Dil, S. & Bulantekin, O. cited in Mehmet Ozcan, 2011).

Moreover, student achievements are mostly depended on teaching methods of their teachers (Dr. Isa, S. G., Dr. Mammam, M. A., Badar, Y. and Bala, T., 2020). Effective classroom managements also relate the student achievements (Jere Brophy, 1986). Then, student achievements are related to the school's physical conditions and infrastructure, practicability, favorable hygiene conditions, library, and science laboratories (Peter Barrett et al., 2019). The leadership styes relate to the result of teachers on student achievements. According to (Heck & Hallinger, 2014), the leadership styes actually relate in student achievements by making circumstances in the school that permit for better constancy and association of teachers.

Limitations of the Study

1. The scope of this study is limited to public secondary schools in Bago (West) Region because the study was based on the available time and resources of the researcher.

2. The selected schools are only public secondary schools but no private schools, alternative schools, monastic schools and charter schools.
3. The selected principals and teachers have at least three years of experience at the current schools.
4. The instrument used can determine three leadership styles. But, the principals may practice other leadership styles.
5. A qualitative research design or mixed method research design was not used for this study due to financial and time limitations.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. A similar study needs to be undertaken in private secondary schools to allow for generalizations of the study findings.
2. A study needs to be undertaken on the correlation between principals' leadership styles in other school levels and student achievements.
3. A similar study needs to be undertaken on the effects of school environment on the student achievement.
4. A study needs to be undertaken on the other Regions or States in Myanmar.
5. A mixed method or qualitative method should be used in next study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were suggested on the analysis of the research findings.

Educational authorities should

- provide enough school facilities, infrastructure and fund.
- train enough to qualified principals for effective administration.
- provide the training teachers for effective teaching.
- implement the recommendations that are needed to be carried out in the educational sectors presented by educational researchers

All principals should

- keep on practicing transactional leadership styles.
- study and decide which leadership styles are appropriate to the current situation.
- attend workshops and trainings arranged by educational authorities and by other educators for upgrading leadership capacity.
- encourage teachers' commitment.
- consider individual's needs and concerns.
- press academic emphasis
- try to involve the parents and state holders voluntary in the school organization.

All teachers should

- be responsible for duties as a teacher towards students, colleagues, school, and educational departments.
- attend trainings and workshops to develop professional.

All students should

- obey school rules.
- Persist, strive to achieve, and are respected by each other and teachers and others for their academic success.

All parents should

- try to know and practice the factors effected on their children's achievement.
- emphasize their children's achievement.

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