

Occupational Stress and Leadership Behavior of Principals in Relation to their Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Principal is the key person in the educational institutions. She is both the academic and executive head of the school as well as a real source of inspiration for teachers through constant flow of information between her and teachers. She sets targets and motivates people to achieve their targets. In order to meet these targets, the way a supervisor or a Principal influences her subordinates is termed as her leadership behavior. Sometimes, this behavior or style may create tension and dissatisfaction among teachers. Teachers become frustrated and start ignoring the work and orders given by the Principals. Furthermore, these days' schools face tremendous pressure to have their students score proficiently; the workplace has become a high stressed environment. . In order to face such type of problems and incorporate the changes in her behavior, a Principal should be Emotionally Intelligent.

Dynamic combinations of Emotional Intelligence competencies inform cognition drives and guides leadership behavior. Emotionally informed cognition drives decision-making processes and regulates a leader's deployment of power and authority and reduces stress. Emotional Intelligence is a type of intelligence that has been heavily studied in social sciences, psychology and business sector, but not in educational arena specifically related to Principals.

If emotions play such a significant part in success of leaders in business and industry then it must be critical for the Principals to know what emotional intelligence is. In addition, Principals must have an awareness of their emotional intelligence level, what their staff perceive their emotional intelligence to be. Furthermore, occupational stress has been studied linking classroom level environment to student's achievement and teacher's job satisfaction. In the realm of education, studies examining the connection between occupational stress, leadership behavior of Principals and their emotional intelligence are lacking. This study has examined that such a relationship exists in educational institutions.

Key words: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership behavior, Occupational stress.

Introduction

Principal is the key person in the educational institutions. She is both the academic and executive head of the school as well as a real source of inspiration for teachers through constant flow of information between him and teachers. She set targets and motivates people to achieve these targets. In order to meet these targets, the way that a supervisor or a principal influence his subordinates is termed as his leadership behavior. Sometimes, this behavior or style may create tension, and dissatisfaction

among teachers. Teachers become frustrated and start ignoring the work and orders given by Principals, in order to face such type of problems and incorporate the changes in her behavior, a Principal should be Emotionally Intelligent. The need of students, parents and staff in schools today vary from those of the same groups even a few years ago. Dynamic combinations, of emotional intelligence competencies inform cognition and guides leadership behavior.

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is a term used to define ongoing stress that is related to the workplace. The stress may have to do with the responsibilities associated with the work itself, or be caused by conditions that are based in the corporate culture or personality conflicts. As with other forms of tension, occupation stress can eventually affect both physical and emotional well being if not managed effectively.

Stress is an inherent factor in any type of vocation or career. At its best, the presence of stress can be a motivator that urges the individual to strive for excellence. However, excess amounts of stress can lead to a lack of productivity, a loss of confidence, and the inability to perform routine tasks. As a result, quality employees lose their enthusiasm for their work and eventually withdraw from the company.

When left unchecked, occupational stress can lead to emotional and physical disorders that began to impact personal as well as professional lives. The individual may develop a level of tension that interferes with sleep, making relaxing outside the workplace impossible. Over time, the stress can trigger emotional disorders such as anxiety, depression and in some cases various phobias that further inhibit the ability to enjoy any aspect of living.

A workplace that provides frequently changing workloads to employees, or does not appear to be interested in career development or offering employees opportunities for advancement, is a frequent source of occupational stress. Unsafe working environments, or even simply unpleasant working environments that are noisy, or otherwise not conducive to productive work, may also cause job-related stress.

In educational sector, stress is increasing day by day because teaching today's young people is not only arduous work, but can be dangerously stressful. Anxiety due to school reform efforts, minimal administrative support, poor working circumstances, lack of involvement in school decision making and lack of resources have been identified as factors that can cause stress among educators.

A certain amount of stress in education is predictable, even constructive. According to Botwinik (2007), it is easy for an educator to become overstressed.

Dimensions of Occupational Stress

According to Osipow (1998) there are six major dimensions of occupational stress. These dimensions are as follows:-

>**Role overload** - “measures the extent to which job demands exceed resources (personal and workplace) and the extent to which the individual is able to accomplish workloads.”

>**Role ambiguity** - “measures the extent to which priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria are clear to the individual.”

>**Role insufficiency** - “measures the extent to which the individual’s training, education, skills and experience are appropriate to job requirements”

>**Role boundary** - “measures the extent to which the individual is experiencing conflicting role demands and loyalties in the work setting”

>**Responsibility** - “measures the extent to which the individual has a great deal of responsibility for the performance and welfare of others on the job.”

>**Physical environment**- “measures the extent to which the individual is exposed to high levels of environmental toxins or extreme physical conditions.

Leadership Behavior

The concept of Leadership has captivated observers and researchers of both oral and written histories. The concept of leadership is a social notion. It was formally developed during the 1960’s to emphasize the ability of the leader to influence the people in his organizational goals. Conceptualized from managerial to militant, to political, formal to informal, transcendental to transformational leadership is very much essential for effective organizational outcomes. Persons in different leadership positions engage themselves in different specific behavior. Leadership behavior means the behavior of a leader towards the followers. Effective leadership behavior will create inspiring and stimulating climate for the workers so that they can enjoy a higher level of morale and are motivated to receive new ideas. Chen and Chen (2005) conducted a study on “Leadership Styles and Teachers’ Job Satisfaction” and found that teachers who perceived transformational leadership were the most satisfied with their jobs. In contrast, teachers who perceived transactional leadership reported less job satisfaction.

The behavior of a leader is the inspiring force that begets healthy climate. This is true in context of educational institutions as well. The role of a leader should be flexible and adaptable to the problems at hand. Leadership is also concerned with the development of a climate within an organization, which ultimately influence the motivation of followers. Leadership requires confidence in oneself as well as in others. As a leader, it is his responsibility to see that objectives of education are being effectively realized through cooperative planning and execution.

Dimensions of Leadership Behavior

They are:

>**Emotional stabilizer**- It is capable of providing emotional stability to ones employees. Motivating, inspiring and encouraging them to overcome major socio-economic hurdles.

>**Team builder**- It is able to have proper alliance, clear communication with members of the team so as to motivate them to work for a vision with dedication.

>**Performance orientor**- shows concern for accomplishment of tasks in stipulated time by instituting strategies that are adaptable to change for enhancing overall organizational performance.

>**Potential Extractor**- Focuses on development and utilization of skills and abilities of individuals. The capabilities of a leader should lie in exploring and channelizing the latent potentialities in a proper manner so that fuller utilization is entrusted.

>**Socially Intelligent**- Develops relationships based on empathy, support, challenge and respect.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is an ability to perceive, assess, and manage the emotions of yourself and others. Daniel Goleman's groundbreaking work on emotional intelligence groups leadership competencies into four buckets: self awareness, self management, social awareness, and relationship management. He introduced the importance of emotional quotient in workplace, noting that intelligence quotient is a less powerful predictor of outstanding leadership than emotional quotient. Emotional Intelligence is an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships to reason and problem-solving on the basis of them. Singh (2007) in a study on "Emotional intelligence and Organizational leadership: A gender study in Indian context" indicate a positive and significant relationship for both genders.

Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

They are:

Self awareness is being aware of oneself.

Empathy is feeling and understanding the other person.

Self-motivation is being motivated internally.

Emotional stability is to stay composed in all situations.

Managing relations is to handle relationship with others.

Integrity is awareness of one's weakness, strengths and beliefs.

Value orientation is to maintain ethical standards.

Commitment is to keep promises.

Significance of the Study

Azman et.al.(2009) found that emotional intelligence has mediated the effect of occupational stress on job performance in the organizational sector. Gardner (2005) concluded that emotional intelligence was relating to the experience of occupational stress and outcomes of it, indicates that employee who reported using emotional intelligence were less likely to report feelings of stress, ill health and higher satisfaction and commitment as compared to those who reported less using of it.

Recent studies on leadership suggest that the presence or absence of emotional intelligence competencies and the ability to manage them is what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective ones. Palmer, Donaldson and Stough (2002) found that higher emotional intelligence was a predictor of life satisfaction. Leaders high in emotional intelligence will build a real social fabric within an organization, whereas

those low in emotional intelligence may tend to create problems for organization through their individual behavior (Goleman, 1997).

Moos (2001) found positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership style. Researchers suggest that the presence or absence of emotional intelligence competencies is what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective ones based on the extensive research.

After Review of Related Literature, it has been found that the research in business sector indicates that leaders with high level of emotional intelligence are more successful in leading their companies. It is also helpful in mediating the effect of occupational stress on job performance. Teachers who are emotionally intelligent showed low score in occupational stress and higher in job satisfaction. Goleman also posits that leaders high in emotional intelligence are key to organizational success.

Given the paucity of research that investigated the relationship between Occupational Stress and EI in education in India, there is a need to fill the organizational and geographical gaps by examining the outcomes of EI on occupational stress. Thus the present study set out to investigate the relationship between occupational stress and Emotional Intelligence of Principals in Schools so that the need for well developed EI Intervention Programmes for them could be emphasized.

Statement of the Problem

It can be stated as: “Occupational stress and leadership behavior of Principals in relation to their emotional intelligence.”

Objective of the Study

- To study the occupational stress of the Principals
- To study the leadership behavior of the Principals
- To study the emotional intelligence of the Principals
- To study the relationship between dimensions of occupational stress and emotional intelligence of Principals in total.
- To study the relationship between dimensions of leadership behavior and emotional intelligence of Principals in total.

Hypothesis

- There exists significant negative relationship between occupational stress and emotional intelligence of the Principals.
- There exists significant positive relationship between leadership behavior and emotional intelligence of the Principals.
- There exists negative relationship between dimensions of occupational stress with the dimensions of emotional intelligence.
- There exists significant positive relationship between dimensions of leadership behavior with the dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on Descriptive survey method

Sample

The study will be based on a sample of 50 Secondary and Senior secondary school Principals from South Delhi.

Method of data collection

Occupational stress inventory (OSI-R) developed by Osipow has three sub scales; in this study Occupational Role Questionnaire will be used. Prior to the administration of tests in different schools, investigator took permission and cooperation of head of institution. All Principals of these schools were assured that the information will be kept strictly confidential and be used only for research purpose. After seeking their consent, different tests were administered on Principals. All the three questionnaires were given to them.

Tools used

- Occupational stress inventory (OSI-R) developed by Osipow (1998)
- Leadership behavior scale developed by Asha Hinger (2005)
- Emotional intelligence scale developed by Anakool and Sanjoy (2002)

Statistical techniques used

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study appropriate statistical techniques were used to analyze the data.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to:

- 50 Principals only
- South Delhi area only
- Three variables only i.e occupational stress, leadership behavior and emotional intelligence

Summary of Findings

The more complex is the job, the more important is emotional intelligence for a deficiency in these abilities can hinder the use of whatever technical expertise or intellect a person may have. Researchers have been making efforts to understand how EQ and IQ complement one another, for instance, how a person's ability to handle stress affects his/her ability to concentrate and put his/her intelligence to use. Lam and Kirby found evidence through their research to support that overall emotional intelligence contributes to cognitive performance in reasoning tasks. In this study also Emotional Intelligence was a significant predictor of Occupational Stress. Results clarify the importance of EI and its usefulness in stress management; hence there is a

need to promote Emotional Intelligence of Principals for better efficiency. EI has a moderating effect on occupational stress.

Conclusion

Principals are individuals who worked within educational organization and lead teachers. In addition, the principal is typically the person held accountable for all decisions within a school. Moreover, there is relationship between the effective leadership behaviors and academic success of school. Accordingly, success is higher in schools where principal's emotional intelligence is developed. One of the important subjects affected by emotional intelligence is behavioral styles of leaders. According to the results got from this research, as long as the level of school principal's emotional intelligence and its sub-scales increase, it becomes an increase tendency also in transformational leadership style.

It may well be that emotional intelligence is a prerequisite to enabling principal leadership. Self and social awareness as well as management of self and others are critical aspects of the principal's behavior that enable the development of supportive principal action and open interpersonal processes in schools. Thus principal emotional intelligence is essential in fostering the openness of school climate as well as facilitating enabling principal leadership.

Ultimately, the structure and functions of the school need to facilitate higher levels of student achievement. The preliminary findings of this inquiry support the notion that enabling leadership of the principal will promote enabling school structure. When such structures are combined with openness in interpersonal functions, it seems reasonable to expect that a culture of academic optimism is not only possible, but likely, and that such a culture can overcome the drag of low socio-economic status and promote higher levels of student achievement. Of course, the latter conclusion remains an untested hypothesis, which is suggested by the findings of the present research. Such is the nature of exploratory research. It frames, refines, and extends more focused theoretical models.

Hence it can be assumed that if the Principals have better EI, they will feel less stressed and will eventually have better leadership performance especially when we talk about Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools where the demand and expectations of the students, parents and management are very high. The present study revealed a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and occupational stress of the Principals.

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