Relationship between School Leadership Style and Teachers' Motivation

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Abstract: *The top management has the pivotal role in this process. The employee morale and motivation should always be kept high by many different ways. It is the leadership style that builds and sustains the employee motivation for better output, and healthy and thriving work environment. Research shows that leadership style impacts employees in a number of ways like employee job satisfaction, morale, performance, motivation, creativity, organizational commitment and trust. The purpose of this research is to study how teachers perceive the leadership styles of their managers and their own motivation level. The study also delves into studying the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' motivation. This a descriptive study design with a sample size of 80 teachers in Mumbai area. The tools were constructed by the researcher and content validated using expert judgement. The Cronbach Alpha for Leadership Style was 0.875, and for Teacher Motivation was 0.895. It was observed that more than 75 % teachers are happy about the leadership, and 99% feel motivated to work in their schools. Pearson Correlation between the two variables was 0.458 (significant at 0.00001level), indicating significant and positive correlation between School Managers' Leadership Style and Teacher Motivation. The null hypothesis therefore, is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. In other words, teacher motivation is high, if the leadership style is found to be encouraging and accommodating. The results are in sync with the available literature. For leaders and managers, understanding and nurturing employee motivation is essential for building a high - performing organization. Effective leadership inspires employees to commitment, trust and long - term loyalty. The ability to shift between styles in response to situational demands is a hallmark of effective leadership in modern, fast - paced, and competitive business landscapes. What is true for business organizations, same is true for educational institutes.*

Keywords: Teacher Motivation, Leadership Style, School Management, Employee Morale, Organisational Commitment

1. Introduction

Leaders have a significant role to play in achieving the set goals of the organization. In fact, the back bone of any organization is the 'Employee'. It is on the ability and the skillsets the employees possess determine the rate of progress of the organization. Hence it is extremely important for the company to recruit employees who would fit the job requirement well. The leaders also play an important role of retaining this carefully recruited workforce. The behaviour of the employees either promote or hamper the organizational climate. The motivational level of the employees should be kept high, as they are the pillars of the organization.

The top management has the pivotal role in this process. The employee morale and motivation should always be kept high by many different ways. Training, facilitations, promotions, rewards, recognitions are some of the ways of taping the employee motivation to do better. Leaders and their leadership styles play a significant role in sustaining employee morale. Understanding employee career goals, aspirations, needs, personal constraints help managers and leaders inject enthusiasm in the employees. It is the leadership style that builds and sustains the employee motivation for better output, and healthy and thriving work environment.

Yukl (2006) describes leadership as the process of influencing others to comprehend and approve about what is required to be done and how to do it. Leadership is the art of getting people to work together toward a shared goal through one's own influence and inspiration (Northouse, 2018). McKinsey and Company (2024) define leadership as a set of mindsets and behaviors that aligns people in a collective direction, enables them to work together and accomplish shared goals, and helps them adjust to changing environments. It is a social process which involves 'Direction, Alignment and

Commitment', where results of collective efforts far more outweigh and amplify the individual efforts. It may be said that leadership is a process of inspiring and guiding individuals to achieve a shared vision. Each style of leadership results into different types of employee behaviours, like innovation, team work, task completion, and many more. This is mainly due to the focus of the leaders. Research shows that leadership style impacts employees in a number of ways like employee job satisfaction, morale, performance, motivation, creativity, organizational commitment and trust.

Critical analysis of impact of leadership style on the employee motivation (Bhole, 2020), and performance (Joseph - Armstrong, 2023) reveal strong relationship among these variables. In order to explore and examine this relationship further in the field of education, the author has undertaken this study.

Mullins (2002) defines motivation as a 'driving force' through which people strive to achieve their goals and fulfil a need or uphold a value. Robbins (2001) defined motivation as the readiness to exert high levels of hard work to reach the company goals, conditioned by effort's ability to fulfil individual needs. The concept of motivation permeates our professional as well as personal lives. It is a process of encouraging and inspiring a person to perform in a particular way. Motivation is an internal state that drives individuals to engage in goal - directed actions. Motivation works as a guiding power for all human behavior. It is an internal or external force that drives individuals to act toward achieving their goals. It can be intrinsic, driven purely by personal gratification or self - actualization; or extrinsic, fueled by external rewards like money or recognition. Motivation plays a crucial role in energizing individuals, sustaining their efforts, and ensuring their commitment to objectives. In the

workplace, employee motivation significantly influences organizational growth, performance, and competitiveness. A motivated workforce fosters creativity, commitment, and energy, while a lack of motivation can result in complacency, disinterest, and decreased morale.

As applies to any business organization, same applies to the education system as well. School leadership, may it be the trustees, principals or supervisors, it certainly affects teachers' morale, motivation to excel which converge into their performance. The leadership style of school managers plays a critical and influential role in the motivating teachers.

Objectives:
The purpose of this research is to study how teachers perceive the leadership styles of their managers and their own motivation level. The study also delves into studying the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' motivation.
The term manager includes the principals and supervisors, as in some schools these two dignitaries guide, mentor and direct the teachers on day - to - day basis.

2. Literature Review

Extensive published literature on this subject is available, where studies are conducted across different industries as well as countries. The focus here is on the education industry though few studies do find their place here. Major theories are also touched upon to provide theoretical background.

Leadership:
Theories of leadership provide diverse perspectives on what makes a leader effective. Different theories have their own belief system which they think works the best. The major groups of theories are Trait Theories, Behavioural Theories, Contingency Theories, and Power and Influence Theories.
1) Trait Theories: These include Great Man Theory and the Trait Theory and their premise is that leaders are born with certain leadership qualities.
2) Behavioural Theories: These include Transactional, Transformational, Authoritarian, Democratic, and Laissez - faire styles of leadership. Their focus is on leaders' explicit behaviors and actions.
3) Contingency Theories: This includes Situational leadership and leaders assess the situation and the context before actions. The focus is on the flexibility and adaptability in leadership.
4) Power and Influence Theories: These theories believe that leaders should exert influence and control over others and adopt different types of power like reward and punishments, authority, expert, legitimate. The focus is on the belief that power dynamics does everything possible.

Each theory proposes certain type of leader behaviour or style. Leadership style refers to the way leaders interact with and influence their teams, shaping organizational culture, employee morale, and overall performance. It incorporates leaders' approaches, actions, decision - making style, and management strategies. Leadership styles range from authoritarian to transformational, each with unique implications for employee engagement and organizational success. The key differentiator among these styles is the leader's approach to decision - making and employee involvement. These styles play a crucial role in influencing organizational culture, promoting employee engagement, and boosting firm performance. Each style offers distinct approaches to decision - making, employee involvement, and adaptability. Effective leadership is essential for fostering organizational growth, inspiring employees, and achieving long - term success. In practice, effective leadership often involves combining elements of multiple theories, adapting to the specific needs of the situation and the people involved. As leadership continues to evolve, understanding these theories helps individuals refine their approach and become more impactful leaders. Table 1 describes the major focus of different theories.

McCauley (2024) concluded that according to McKinsey analysis of academic literature and a global survey of nearly 200, 000 people in 81 organizations, there are four types of behaviors that account for 89 percent of leadership effectiveness: being supportive, operating with a strong orientation toward results, seeking different perspectives, and solving problems effectively

Motivation:
Motivation theories offer essential insights into the factors that drive human behavior in the workplace. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of motivation, addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. While some focus on individual needs and cognitive processes, others emphasize the role of equity, behavioural reinforcement, and managerial perception. Together, they offer practical strategies for managers to foster motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance within organizations.

Theories of motivation provide diverse perspectives on what makes a leader effective. Different theories have their own belief system which they think works the best. In the domain of motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs proposes a five - level framework of human needs —physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self - actualization — fulfilling lower-level needs is a prerequisite to achieving higher level needs. Content theories mainly focus on factors motivating individuals by identifying specific human needs, Process theories' focus is cognitive processes behind motivation, Reinforcement theories believe that behavior is shaped and maintained through rewards and punishments, and Job Design theories lay stress on the structure and design of work to influence motivation and satisfaction.

Relation Between Leadership and Motivation:
The relationship between leadership and motivation is fundamental to achieving individual, team, and organizational success. Leadership theories suggest that effective leaders significantly influence outcomes by enhancing the motivation of their followers. Motivation, a goal - oriented force that drives individuals to achieve objectives, plays a critical role in the leader - follower dynamic. Leaders who understand the diverse motivational needs of their employees can create an environment that fosters engagement, commitment, and higher performance. Effective leadership requires more than task - oriented

management; it demands the ability to inspire, guide, and influence people. Leaders leverage motivation by recognizing employee needs, offering clear goals, and aligning personal aspirations with organizational objectives. Locke and Latham (1990) emphasize that there is no universal formula for motivation, but effective leaders understand the nuances of human nature and tailor their strategies accordingly. Research by Harrell (2008) highlights that if leaders aim to improve organizational outcomes, they must first address the motivation of their followers.

Impact of leadership on employee work motivation and performance was studied by different researchers across the globe. Strong positive relation between leadership style and employee motivation has been concluded by Naile and Selesho (2014), Khan, Rehmat, Hassan Butt, Farooqi, and Asim (2020), Bhole (2020), Moghimi, Sadeghi, & Ghasemi (2020), Xue, Luo, Luan, & Wang (2022), Vasileva and Datta (2021), Joseph - Armstrong (2023), Ismael (2023), Xuefeng (2023), Sokolic, Croitoru, Florea, Robescu, and Cosac (2024), Hirawat (2024), Wulandari, Ginting, & Prayito, (2025). All these equivocally conclude that leadership styles positively impact employee motivation.

In the domain of education too researchers have found a significant positive relationship between leadership style and teachers' motivation (Sakerani, Imron, A., Djatmika, & Imron, Ar., 2019; Zohair, Shooroq, Najwa, & Issahytham, 2021; Yalçınkaya, Dağlı, Altınay, Altınay, & Kalkan, 2021; Khalik, & Musyaffa, 2021; Sahara & Sarwoko, 2021; Badrun, Mustahiqurrahman, Indra, Fakhrurrazi, & Akbar, 2022; Sudadi, Lahiya, Rijal, Mustafa & Lumingkewas, 2023; Zarwini, Ahyani, & Fitriani, 2022; Soim, Haryanti, Mufron, & Erfiana, 2022; Han, Tösten, Zakir, & Elçiçek, 2022; Dakir, Qodir, Fauzi, Nurbudiyani & Astuti, 2023; Kristian, Ahyani, & Mahasir, 2023; and Sariakin, Yeni, Usman, Mare, Munzir, & Saleh, 2025).

Some scholars have compared different leadership styles and employee motivation. Transformational leadership greatly increased employee motivation and job satisfaction when compared with laissez - faire (Saleem, Aslam, Rafiq, & Rao, 2019; and Chen, Li, Zhang, & Zeng, 2021) transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Tahir, 2015; Bhole, 2020; Xuefeng, 2023; Hirawat, 2024); autocratic leadership (Fiaz, Su, Ikram, Xi'an, & Saqib, 2017; Xuefeng, 2023); and abusive supervision (Xue, Luo, Luan, and Wang, 2022). Nielsen, Boye, Holten, Jacobsen, & Andersen (2018) observed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles work well in combination in motivating employees. Xue (2023) observed that intrinsic factors are the main motivators for young people to continue working, while extrinsic factors have more of an impact on older people.

The research in education where different leadership styles were compared. The conclusion was transformative leadership style was more effective in motivating teachers than any other style (Shepherd - Jones & Jill, 2018; Lingmin, Ghani, & Islam, 2024; Gilbar, 2015; Augustine, & Rebekah, 2024; Ashira, Lemma, Adem, & Kebede, 2023; David, 2006; Zareen, Razzaq, & Mujtaba, 2014; Cummins, 2024; and Riedle, 2015).

Employee motivation refers to the internal forces that lead people to take actions that further the organization's goals (Deci & Ryan, 2018). Motivated employees show higher commitment to their jobs and tend to surpass performance expectations. Research highlights that the employees are more involved when their contributions are recognized, appreciated, their views are considered, their efforts are acknowledged and documented (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Motivation is shaped by individual traits, external job factors, and organizational practices (Gopal & Chowdhury, 2014).

Centralized decision - making is the main characteristic of the autocratic leadership, where leaders possess full control on employees, and employee input is minimal (Jogulu, 2010). This approach is often effective in high - pressure environments or situations requiring strict adherence to procedures, such as in the military or construction industry (Tuckey, 2017; Samad, 2015). It ensures clear authority and accountability, enabling efficiency and precision in task execution (Trivisonno & Barling, 2016). However, it can also hinder employee creativity and motivation, as workers have limited autonomy in decision - making.

The research in this area tilts heavily towards business domain and less on the education side. Moreover, the research on leadership in education finds little space in Indian scenario. Published research is more outside India.

H1: From the literature above, it is hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between school managers' leadership style and teachers' motivation.

3. Methodology

This a descriptive study design with a sample size of 80 teachers in Mumbai area. Mumbai was chosen for ease of data collection. The tools for the Leadership Style and Motivation were constructed by the researcher and were content validated using expert judgement. The Leadership style tool had 15 items measuring behavioural parameters – Adaptability, Empowerment, Relationship - Oriented, Task - Oriented, and Visionary and Strategic. The Motivation tool had 15 items measuring Conducive Working Conditions, Academic Freedom, and Scope for Professional Growth. The Cronbach Alpha for Leadership Style was 0.875, and for Teacher Motivation was 0.895.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

Obj 1: To study how teachers perceive the leadership styles of their managers and their own motivation level.

The scores on these two variables were equally divided into three categories; Low, Moderate and High, based upon the minimum (15) and maximum (75) possible scores on a five - point rating scale. Table 1 gives the frequency count and percentage of teachers having Low, Moderate and High perception of their Principles' Leadership Style and Motivation levels.

Table 1: Perception of Leadership Style and Motivation

Perception	Leadership Style Frequency & (%)	Teacher Motivation Frequency & (%)
Low	3 (3.75%)	1 (1.25%)
Moderate	57 (71.25%)	50 (62.5%)
High	20 (25%)	29 (36.25%)

It is observed that very few teachers (about 5%) perceive their Principals' leadership style as well their own Motivation Low. More than 70% teachers have moderate perception of their Principals' leadership style; and 25% teachers hold very high perception of Leadership Style.36% teachers feel that they are highly motivated. It is concluded that 76 % teachers hold high esteem about the leadership, and about 99% teachers feel motivated to work under the leadership of the principals.

Obj 2: To study the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' motivation.

Pearson Correlation between the two variables was calculated which is presented in the following Table.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Leadership Style and Teacher Motivation and p - Value

Correlation	Leadership Style	p - Value
Teacher Motivation	0.45797	0.000019

Pearson Correlation between the two variables was 0.458 (significant at 0.00001level), indicating significant and positive correlation between School Managers' Leadership Style and Teacher Motivation. The null hypothesis therefore, is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. In other words, teacher motivation is high, if the leadership style is found to be encouraging and accommodating.

5. Discussion

The results are in sync with the available literature. Roßnagel (Rossnagel) (2016) in his book Leadership and Motivation, emphasizes that motivating requires two things happening simultaneously – improving factors that enhance motivation, and co - creating inspirational work context. This will bring about a paradigm shift from motivating to enabling motivation. Organizational success relies heavily on strong leadership because it influences employee morale, work satisfaction, and output (Moghimi, Sadeghi, & Ghasemi 2020). Leaders play a critical role in motivating employees, as they must understand team members' evolving needs and expectations to build an inclusive and productive work environment (Almansour, 2012). Key motivational drivers include fulfilling employee needs, ensuring workplace fairness, promoting employee development, and offering recognition and rewards (Hamidifar, 2009). Motivation is not a fixed state; it fluctuates based on individual and situational factors (Robbins, 2013). Effective motivation enhances employee engagement, fosters organizational resilience, and drives sustained success (Trembley, 2009).

6. Conclusion

Attracting and retaining talented workforce is a challenge of the day for every firm, if it has to sustain in cutthroat competition today. Highly motivated workforce is a strategic asset and a source of competitive advantage. For leaders and managers, understanding and nurturing employee motivation is essential for building a high - performing organization. Effective leadership inspires employees to commitment, trust and long - term loyalty. Ultimately, effective leaders must be adaptable, selecting leadership styles that align with organizational needs and the nature of the tasks at hand. These leadership styles validate that the efficient and effective leadership is not a one - size - fits - all notion. Each approach has its strengths and limitations, and successful leaders must be versatile, adapting their style to meet the needs of their teams, tasks, and organizational environment. The ability to shift between styles in response to situational demands is a hallmark of effective leadership in modern, fast - paced, and competitive business landscapes.

What applies to the organizations, applies to educational institutes as well. School management has to nurture the leaders to be change makers. Inspired and motivated teachers are nation builders. Destiny of a nation is shaped in its classrooms, as aptly mentioned in the Indian Education Commission (1964 - 66) popularly known as Kothari Commission Report. "If you change a classroom, you can change a community, and if you change enough communities, you can change the world" - Erin Gruwell.

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