



Working under Pressure: How are Head Teachers inhibited and Challenged while pursuing the Headship in Secondary Schools?

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ABSTRACT

This study explored what experiences head teachers had while pursuing secondary school headship when they were inhibited by various pressure groups inside and outside of the school. The study aimed at understanding, describing, and interpreting how do secondary school head teachers manage their headship role, and what are the storied experiences that they had while working as head teachers. The participants of the present study were head teachers (n=13) with a minimum of five years' headship experience in public sector secondary schools within Sahiwal Division, Province of Punjab, Pakistan. By using of a narrative qualitative inquiry approach, data were collected from participants through semi-structured interviews who were selected purposively. Two main themes were identified after the data were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The key findings pointed out that the head teachers of Public Secondary Schools continuously faced obstacles from pressure groups during their routine work. These pressure groups comprise of both internal and external pressure groups. The results of the study affirm the need to address these issues to enable the head teachers to work freely to foster quality education in the schools.



Introduction

The term principal was devised in 1838, in the educational reports (Harris, 2011). More or less the principal played the same role as the teacher ever (Grady, 1990). The position of the principal emerged in the mid-nineteenth century when students were divided into grades and assigned a single teacher (Rousmaniere, 2007). Harris (2011) affirmed that the principal was responsible for the supervision and administration of the school and for recording attendance. Being the principal instructional leaders, it was the duty of the principal to improve the student's abilities, hire efficient teachers, improve the capabilities and skills of teachers, and take the school culture to the next level (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). The principal was also accountable for complying with the state and federal regulations, having a sense of high accountability, looking over issues regarding discipline, meeting with and answering to concerned parents, connecting with community collaborators, and managing the budgets despite ups and downs in funding, in addition to the instructional

activities, (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; De Leon, 2006; Whitaker, 1995).

The role of the principal was perceived as an opportunity to bring change and improvement in guiding the students to achieve high goals and directing the teachers and other staff towards a cogent mission side by side. The principal worked in collaboration with the teachers and staff for the improvement of the students and thus the community at a bigger level (Malone, Sharp, & Walter, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1995). The responsibilities of a principal are multi-dimensional; they are not confined to a single sort of task (Fullan, 2001). The traditional principal had a management-oriented job, which involved managing schedules, transport, campus, and staff issues. At present, the job of a principal has evolved, to be an instructional leader, but this has not minimized the managerial tasks from the responsibilities of a principal (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). A person who would be accountable for such a large number of tasks is highly in demand (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen 2005).

The role of a modern principal has become very complex as compared with that of the conventional principal. The states are authorizing a large number of administrators to fill the empty seats of the principals although a shortage of principals is reported in almost every educational report (Boehlert & O'Connell, 1999; Joerger, 2000; McAdams, 1998; Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2001; Young & Creighton, 2002). It can be noticed from many pieces of literature that day by day the job of principal is losing its attractiveness and many teachers who even have leadership certificates are losing their interest in the job (Young & Creighton, 2002). Ten major factors which demotivate educators to apply for headship have been identified by (Cooley and Shen, 1999).

The uppermost factor that prevents the teachers from applying for headship is the relation of the principal with the rest of the teachers, members of the board, and administration. The second reason that deters them from the post is the lack of compensation, the salary of the principals does not commensurate with the amount of work they do. The third reason is the lack of community support; the principals are victims of community politics and confined to the issues like lack of funding, violence, self-indulging students, and parents' unnecessary involvement in school matters. The fourth reason that discourages the students is the poor life quality of the principals, which involves the quality of their residence, and recreational and cultural activities. The fifth factor which is a deterrent for aspiring headship is the disorderliness of personal life.

Due to long work hours, multi-tasking, dealing with the politics of the community, and insecure position, the principals are stressed out and their life balance is destroyed. The inhibiting factor that comes six is the image of the principal, the reputation of a principal is always in trouble, it depends on the principal's behavior with teachers and other staff, availability, and his administration style. The reason number seven is the district location; applicants prefer the districts of suburban or rural areas. The eighth factor is the psychological stress a principal faces; the principals are frustrated, exhausted, and stressed out due to disparaging shareholders. Working condition is the ninth inhibiting factor, which is the expectations of the community, the size and wealth of the district, student composition, and the ratio of administration to students. The final factor is the nature of work, the role of a principal is highly demanding and exacting.

Educators are often deterred from pursuing a career in administration due to the increased amount of time that must be committed to both the work day and school year. There is the perception that after-school parent meetings, committee meetings, discipline, and community affairs create unwanted time constraints. Additional time commitments may involve more consultation with teachers and parents and an ever-increasing special education workload (Moore, 1999). In addition to time, negative influences by outside parent groups and overwhelming paperwork hinder the functioning of the headship. The perception is that there is too much bureaucratic paperwork for the principal to serve students and faculty effectively (Moore, 1999).

The Educational Research Service (2000) in a study finding identified several factors that deter educators for not opting for the headship:

1. Compensation, as compared to responsibilities, is not sufficient and justifiable.
2. The amount of stress is too much.
3. A lot of time is required.
4. It is much more difficult to satisfy parents and community members.
5. It becomes difficult to focus on instruction due to societal problems.

Similar themes have been identified from other research, particularly the jobs with stressful nature and the amount of time involved are overwhelming. A variety of factors such as the increased demands for accountability and pressure from various groups are involved in this deterrence for educators (ERS, 2000). A principal most of his time busy with the superintendence of the staff, student interaction, and disciplining of students (Doud and Keller, 1998). He spends the least amount of time on budget administration, central

office staff administration, and managing staff development. Besides his basic duties, he is also expected that he must take part in sports events in the evening hours and on weekends, and he/she must be going to the school board and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Furthermore, he is responsible to arrange substitute teachers when there is a shortage of teachers (McKay, 1999). The load of duties with overtime spent is ever-increasing for the principal, but all of this is containing the personal time of a principal (ERS, 2000). These multidimensional tasks are making it difficult for the principals to focus on their primary purpose of being an effective instructional leader which is associated with the role of principal (Adams, 1999; Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001; Muller, 2000; Tucker & Codding, 2002).

Long working hours are another inhibiting factor for the aspirants of headship. Principals have to work for 4 to 5 nights per week and besides this, they work on weekends as well (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; Hargadine, 2002; Moore, 1999; Schutte, 2003). According to Schutte (2003), the Time commitment was one of the biggest barriers in the pursuit of headship. High expectations of people; to be active in the teachers' consultation groups, parents' meetings, and community services is a major reason for the expansion of a principal's work. These days the principals have to spend 55 to 60 hours per week because of extracurricular activities and engagements other than instructional tasks. When comparing today's principals with that of the past, it becomes evident that the principal from 30 years back used to spend 45 to 50 hours a week on his work (McAdams, 1998).

Hodgen and Wylie carried out a study in 2005 in New Zealand, about principals' perception of stress and work time related to the job, they analyzed the data of 1523 principals through the Hauora-Wellberg electronic survey of Principals. Almost 40% of the respondents rated their stress level as extremely high. 90% of the interviewees worked for more than 50 hours a week and 60% of them worked even more than 60 hours a week. Even though so much overworking and paying too much extra time to their job, the principals do not achieve the feeling of achievement, due to time disintegration, and they have less amount of time to reflect on their performance (Gilm & Lanman-Givens, 2001).

A principal has to be alert 24/7. The incumbent is bound to overlook the school supervision, and he can't afford to neglect it even for a small interval of time. The principal is supposed for a duty call at any time, even at night and on the weekends. He is to be called for issues such as the school being ransacked and minor issues like school alarms being out of order. Being an amiable principle, it is expected that he would take care of the school, parents, teachers, and his household simultaneously (Ruder, 2006). Due to challenging working hours, the principals cannot pay attention to their health. Their job is with less physical activity. The study of Hodgen and Wylie concludes that one-third of 1,532 respondents in New Zealand who were surveyed underline the need for physical activity for their health improvement. They needed physical therapies although they appeared to be sound and steady. Half of the respondents stated that they could not easily run across a football field.

Arthur, Mallory, and Tekleselassie sustained in a 2009 Georgia study that the factors associated with stress and time make headship undesirable. 12 respondents from Georgia who had completed their leadership certification were interviewed rigorously but did not want to go for headship, another group of 37 instructional leaders who were about to complete their leadership certification, were interviewed. It was disclosed that the more participants explore the hardships of a principal the more they become reluctant to apply for the job thinking it repulsive. It was affirmed by the majority of participants that the job deprives them of their household time even in the evening (Arthur et. al., 2009). A respondent was of the view that it looks strange to neglect his children for attending to others' children.

A deterrent that looks different from the other hindrances like workload, numerous responsibilities, high accountability, and the huge investment of time is the lack of compensation (Mitchell, 2009). The headship is unattractive not only because of interrelated issues but also due to its unattractive salary. Some veteran and experienced teachers earn much more than the salaries of principals, which makes this salary disgusting as compared to the responsibilities of the post (Viadero, 2009). To attract competitive aspirants for the post, School Districts should offer charming salaries which could exceed the load of the challenging work (Bass, 2006).

Newton and Zeitoun 2010 conducted a study, to examine the effects of work conditions and task requirements on the interest of applicants applying for the headship. In this study, 239 teachers had to rate the position announcement, for a principal vacancy. The study results confirmed that the applicants were less attracted to the vacancy due to the expanded school system and long work weeks. It was found that the relationship between attraction towards a job, school size, and work hours was indirect. It was observed that

males were more attracted to the position than females which confirmed the factor that determined the response was the gender of the applicant. It could be streamlined by their roles in society. Both of the genders yet responded equally and positively in one case, it was when the job vacancy provided more of a leadership opportunity that signaled differently than the traditional or old-style hierarchy.

The latest literature affirms that principals are captivated by their exhausting, complicated, and winding roles and they are much stressed out because of their jobs, (Portin, Shen, & Williams 1998; Tucker and Coddling, 2002). Aspirants these days are reluctant to fill in the vacancies for principals because they perceive this post as too laborious to opt for it (Herding, 2001; Whitaker, 2001). The responsibilities of the principals are wide-ranged and even widening over time, educational reform movement in the 1980s burdened more the job of a principal (Copland, 2001). Principals are reported to be working in a frustrating environment, which is the cause behind their drain of strength and exhausts them physically as well as morally (Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998). Principals work in a conflicting and hostile environment, which undermines them and they are unable to manage the order on the campuses (Davis 1998, pp. 58-59). Whan and Thomas, 1996 asserted that principals have to experience psychological stress, and mental and physical dismay, as a result, principals are exhausted and decide to retire before completing their tenure.

The increase in their responsibilities and job pressure brings an upsurge in the stress level for principals (Cushing, Kerrins&Johnstone, 2003; Ferrandino, 2001; Olayiwola, 2008; Whitaker, 1996). There are too many factors that involve stress for principals such as condemnation, accountability, and profuse responsibilities. The health of the principals is affected by such factors as elevated blood pressure levels and an increase in weight (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003). If someone is hampered beyond his capacity, he will be surely stressed; principals are no exception the same way. A survey was conducted to examine the factors and consequences of their stress involving 100 principals from all public secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria (Olayiwola, 2008). The demographic-based analysis of job stress was undertaken in the same study, through a 40-item questionnaire. The study found that only (6.4%) of assenters were exempted of over-stressed by their jobs. 76.6% of respondents reported their job as a burden and many of them described it as somewhat stressful. 17% of respondents stated their job was challenging. The findings of the study inferred that the principals experience hectic work time irrespective of their gender and locality.

All sorts of tasks related to the headship add up to the stress level of the principal, no matter it is related to campus management or community service. Hewitt, Pijanowski, and Denny 2008 conducted a survey of the teacher leaders in the school districts of Arkansas, who despite having administrative skills did not opt for the post of principal. They were asked to describe the deterring factors and the factors which abated them from becoming principals were ranked on a scale of 1 to 11. The stress and pressure associated with the work were among the top five factors on the list. The list of duties and responsibilities a principal is supposed to execute is long enough; that is why the dire need for well-trained and qualified principals has also increased. It is expected that the principals are efficient enough to handle smoothly the matters of a campus building (Leone et al., 2009). Being the instructional leader of the campus is very crucial, but with his hectic routine, a principal is incapable to manage it all.

Working for 50 to 60 hours a week, dealing with everyday issues, and lack of management training often cause the breakdown of a principal (Viadero, 2009). As the principal is indulged most of the time in other administrative tasks like security check of the campus, checking the transport routes, academic schedules, and other routine tasks, the didactic training of the faculty and the students is neglected Alford et al. (2011) (p. 29). It was also observed in the same study that the principals were unable to devote due attention to the leadership activities because of students' academic matters. The principals spend less than 30%, of their time on professional growth activities and observations and they spend the rest of their time resolving the issues of classrooms, doing paperwork, and other tasks (Gilson's, 2008).

It was unveiled in research by Shen, Cooley, and Wegenke (2004) the principal's job is becoming more twisting with every passing day, it is so winding that the authorities are layered on one another. Another factor associated with this job due to which it is taxing enough to lose attractiveness is that they see it as an exacting job which is the reason that applicants decide not to apply for the position of principal, (Cusik, 2002). As a result of the Hence the consequent leaders look at the job of assistant principal or principal, just as planning and managing some agenda (Fink & Brayman, 2004) they don't consider it attractive at all. The stress the principals face during their careers is the prime factor that makes them juxtapose and analyze the good aspects and the constraints of the job (Alford, Ballenger, Perreault, and Zellner, 2011). The public image of a campus principal is of a subjugated and unacknowledged bureaucrat, and the educators don't perceive this job better than that their own. This way, the position of a principal seems to be dreadful and unattractive according to Fenwick and Pierce (2001), it spree as a universal phenomenon and "No wonder they're leaving in droves"; and no one would be willing to get this position. (p. 38)

Similarly in a survey by Whitaker and Vogel (2005), the reason that prevented the educators from being the candidates for the headship and the administrators was family obligations and commitments. They opted not to be head teachers in different ways; 13 percent of the respondents wanted to be leaders, but not by being a principal, and 11 percent of them did not want to go for any other position as they were satisfied with their current jobs, and other 11 percent of the respondents intended for K-12 leadership roles (Whitaker & Vogel). The stress related to management-oriented jobs affects family life badly as such job holders neglect their families due to their workload and sometimes even they have to work while they are at home (Fields, 2005).

The social as well as personal life of the principals is corroded by this overload of work. They feel regret for neglecting their families as well as their physical and mental health. The aspiring candidates are scared off by this and they do not find headship favorable for them. This over-workload and stress of headship hamper their aspiration for this job. The aspirants think realistically, and these complicated situations seem to be associated with this position that they prefer to stick with the assistant headship and directly leap towards headship. They are convinced that it is better for them to first acquire training in managing workload by becoming an assistant principal. It is affirmed by the study by Kwan (2005), the aspiration of assistant principals for headship is not interrelated with the academic performance or class level of their students.

It is evident from a lot of research studies that a large number of potential applicants disengage themselves from applying for the headship. A basic factor that fixes this disengagement is that aspirants desire to keep a work-life balance and they find it scarce in the life of headship (Cranston, 2006). A load of responsibilities was increased for the principals in 2002, as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, (Groff, 2003). After the implementation of this act, schools were bound had reported their performance publically and this added to the frustration of principals. Asch (1999) stated that the principal of the contemporary age is responsible for the growth of diversified students. Though the principal is conferred with so many responsibilities he does not have control over the selection and assignment of the leadership positions and curriculum, as these are controlled by the central office (Tucker and Coddling, 2002) (p. 3). Sinatra (2002) concludes that it seems unjustified to consider the principal responsible for the performance of students, as the principal had no authority to fire the ineffective teachers as they were granted tenure by the central office.

As observed a sharp increase in the responsibilities of principals has severely challenged their authority. As state lawmaking forums are amplifying their focus on student achievement, principals are scared of being directly held accountable for student performance. Principals experience frustration with increased stress on the loss of job satisfaction (McAdams, 1998). Principals are causing to carry personal liability insurance due to increasingly volatile disciplinary measures. They are sued personally for things going wrong in the school beyond their control (Groff, 2001). The lack of support from the community and parents is an important factor for aspiring teachers that deters them to evaluate the job of headship. While applying for the post, teachers give this factor significant weightage as pointed out by the teachers enrolled in Educational Leadership Program at a Midwestern university (Cooley and Shen, 1999).

The teachers look at many issues like funding, the indulgence of students in bad habits, politics of the community, and parents when considering administrative positions, subtly. The job of a principal lacks a balance between his responsibilities and authority. A principal is supposed to work for the academic improvement of the students without being bossy to them, as parents care much more about the way their children are treated. Principal spends a large amount of their time attending to the parents' queries (Cusick, 2003). All of the factors discussed above affirm that the secondary school headship has emerged as a less aspirant position due to increased responsibilities with a sharp decline in authority, the head teachers work under pressure and among pressure groups. The head teacher solely is considered responsible for all shortcomings within the school irrespective of the fact how much authority he was given to practice.

Purpose of the Study

The qualitative study in hand was conducted with the main purpose to examine how pressure groups inhibit and challenge the head teachers to pursue their headship at the schools and how headteachers deal with the pressure groups for their survival while pursuing the headship at the secondary schools in the Sahiwal Division of the Punjab province in Pakistan. The study focused on exploring the factors associated with the motivation of head teachers to pursue their headship at secondary schools, to detect challenges and difficulties that head teachers come across in their day-to-day work, to examine how head teachers handle those challenges for their survival as heads of the school and to identify the approach of the participants to

pursue their headship. The study also focused on exploring the ways and techniques of how head teachers cope with potential pressure groups at their workplace.

Research Questions

The following research questions were framed to conduct the study:

1. How do head teachers are inhibited and challenged by the pressure groups while pursuing the headship at the schools?
2. How do head teachers cope with the pressure groups for their survival while pursuing the headship at the schools?

Methodology

This study adopted the narrative approach of the qualitative study. As Wiebe (2009) characterized narrative inquiry as “an approach based on methodology by which the narrative is investigated or employed for presenting the view about phenomena” (p. 4). In a wider range, the term narrative can be opted for referring to different aspects, which could be: (a) Some sort of presentation either to be in oral or written form. (b) A story in the form of organized content. (c) Some type of explicit data. (d) A sort of research report that is unlike the traditional or conventional research reports which include arguments (Wiebe, 2009). Marshall and Rossman (2006), assert that “In the narrative approach, it is presumed that people narrate stories for constructing the realities. A researcher records and explores the story which the participant reveals” (p. 117).

A total of thirteen participants amongst the serving head teachers which we chose for interview were males as well as females. Eight of the participants were male head teachers and five participants were female. The participants of the research belonged to urban as well as rural locality schools in the Sahiwal division. Sahiwal Division was opted for because of its higher literacy rate. We approached the three District Education (Secondary Wing) Office(s) within the Sahiwal Division to get a list of secondary schools within the districts, students’ enrolment, names of the head teachers, landline numbers, and location of the schools. We collected data through a semi-structured interview guide. It was not determined beforehand how many interviews will be required to conduct the research. We affirmed that the categories of data have met their saturation level after scrutinizing thirteen copies of collected responses. The transcriptions were examined based on their themes and these themes helped to conclude. The profoundness or divergences in the development of major categories are the factors that assist the researcher in determining his position in the process of sampling (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

The essentialist method (Braun and Clark, 2006, 81) helped in maintaining experiences, meanings, and the reality of asserters. It established the basis of the thematic analysis of our data on the guideline given by Braun and Clarke. After the interviews, we had the data in both audio and script form. We analyzed the data over and over again, to discover themes, codes, patterns, and categories in the data. Then the researchers transcribed the interviews. After transcribing the interviews, we completed the coding of the text and as a result, different themes emerged. These themes reflect the true depiction of the lived experiences of the participants regarding pressure groups. We maintained all the activities in this process, recorded in the log to have field notes. The following themes were identified after the analysis of the transcripts.

Results

We are enabled through narrative inquiry to bring forth peoples’ stories in an organized manner, analyze systematically, present gathered information coherently, and present as these have been explained by them, it comes across traditional and modernist views of reality, truth, personhood, and knowledge. The construct of a story leads us in organizing facts of deduced events people experienced, the beliefs, values, and experiences which backed to utter those intentions, interpretations, and plans. The analysis is a process that continues throughout the research procedure, it is not rather an isolated activity that is adopted after data collection (Gehart, 2007). First of all the researchers transcribed the interviews. The interview, logbook, and focus group data were analyzed by using qualitative content analysis (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to explore more from the data. After completion of transcribing and coding of the text, different themes emerged. Identification of codes was completed in this first phase; these codes were divided into 6 different categories throughout the data. These themes depicted a detailed depiction of the experiences of the head teachers experiences about their challenges at their workplace. Finally, these were listed under two main themes:

Pressure Groups

Internal and external Pressure groups were identified as major and significant themes out of the experiences shared by the head teachers. As they reported that they come across two kinds of pressures

simultaneously while serving as a head teacher of a high school. Internal pressure groups were identified as the first pressure group which mostly comprised of teaching staff as they informed they face pressures from them as they practice lobbying, and involve the community and political figures to get specific favors. External pressure groups as unveiled from the head teachers' stories were related to the community, notables among the community, political figures, and parents. As indicated by the participants' majority, the head teacher has to face these pressures solely as there is no reasonable support from colleagues and the department most of the time. Headteacher defends themselves during departmental inquiries and he has to face the music as a result of the baseless application and sometimes even goes through transfers as a result of these applications. Now we will discuss both pressure groups separately through the storied experiences of participants.

External Pressures

A veteran male participant 'NR' posted in a big urban area school with 19 years of headship experience, informed that he had encountered lots of pressure from the local community in the recent past, three years back, the school management banned the unauthorized entry of public after school hours who not only used the school playground for sports activities but they repeatedly denied School properties like breaking classrooms locks, damaging CCTV cameras, stealing washroom tabs, etc. They had been warned many times to evade such practice.

News broke on a local TV channel, the next day that a six-year-old student of the school has been physically tortured by a female teacher. They managed to get a false medico-legal certificate from a Government hospital by engraving wound marks on the back of the child with certain chemicals. An FIR was lodged against the female teacher based on the said certificate. The higher authorities issued a strict show cause notice to the participant along with the female teacher mentioned earlier to submit their stance. When it came to the notice of the child, they came into the office, a week after the incident as they were unaware of the whole development; they submitted an affidavit that the incident was a result of miss understanding. The participant faced departmental inquiry at different levels even after the matter has been settled, the female teacher had to face Court procedures alongside departmental inquiry.

Male participant 'NR' told further:

Once the participant forbade the school neighbors to halt the entry of their cattle who used to come to school after closing hours and used to gaze at the school's grassy lawns and harm plants and small trees as informed by the school watchman. An armed person entered his office, shouted scolded, and threatened him. The participant had to seek help from local police with help of his staff. The person was handed over to the police where he was warned to avoid illegal interference in school matters. The headteacher is responsible to run the institution in a good manner; he can't afford confrontation with the local community. There is insufficient support from higher authorities, the head teacher has to compromise or face confrontation. The school administration is adversely affected in both ways. Headteachers have to adopt an over-cautious approach in such circumstances. The head teacher works with decreased motivation level in such situations which badly affects the performance of the school, he further elaborated:

“Undue and illegal interference from the local community is faced by almost every institution and most of them ignore to avoid confrontation and developing personal enmity as a result, as the department turns a deaf ear to such matters”

Headteachers have to face lots of external pressures from the local community. A male participant 'KB' with nine years of headship experience, posted in an urban area school while discussing the interference of the local community described that he had experienced exceptional pressure in the school he is working at present. He prohibited the entry of outsiders who used to play cricket in the school playground in the evening violating security SOPs suggested by the security department regarding fool-proof security arrangements in the school due to certain security alerts. He was informed about the issue many times by the school watchman about these desecrations. After his orders, those outsiders started to jump in from the boundary walls to enter the playground. Alongside playing there, they entered the school building with the excuse of using toilets and drinking water. They smashed School installations like security cameras and water taps in the toilets and even plants in the grassy lawns. The watchman tried to dissuade them time and again but they didn't bother.

The illegal entry into the school premises halted when strict warning letters were served to the parents of those outsiders. The participant was served with a summons from the commissioner's office after a week

of this development a fake application was lodged against him with charges like corruption and misuse of school funds. The participant attended the office and got a copy of the application to prepare the defense.

An open court inquiry in presence of applicants and the general public was conducted in the school and the participant was asked to submit his defense. The participant submitted his defense and faced the inquiry. The allegations rose upon were successfully defended by the participant, one by one with evidence. The participant was cleared by the hearing authority however the participant suffered a lot in the whole process. [The inquiry was a net result of not facilitating community demands]

A male participant 'JB' posted in a rural area school revealed while sharing his experiences that he had faced pressures during his entire service as a head teacher from the local community because he was not ready to create a space for their undue demands. He stated.

"There were three difficult teachers in my school. They were deadwood and reluctant to accomplish any task assigned to them. They lobbied against me and tried seeking support from other teachers to create hurdles in my routine work related to administration. I tried much to handle them but they were not ready to follow me".

The participant surrendered the services of two teachers to headquarters. The participant spared the third one. They approached the notables in the community and the participant was asked to withdraw their surrendering orders and rejoin the teachers. The participant denied doing that. They manage to pressurize the participant through his close relatives with the same demand. The participant told his relatives about the real issue with a request to spare him in that matter. Then local politicians came forward in support of teachers. Surrendering orders were withheld and issued fresh orders to rejoin the teachers. They pressurized the District Education Officer to ensure the execution of the fresh orders by the participant. The DEO himself contacted the participant to execute the new orders and he declared he could not resist the pressures of the politicians.

The participant informed the officer that mal administration will prevail again if he does so; he had hardly managed to overcome administrative issues. The officer told the politicians that the headmaster was not ready to accommodate. The participant was pressurized once again by representatives of the political leader and the member parliament himself to avoid creating problems for his voters and supporters. When the participant did not entertain their demands, a series of complaint applications were registered at different forums altogether such as Anti-Corruption, Special Branch, and department complaint cell citing allegations of corruption charges and mishandling of school funds. During the inquiry process, the participant had to face tough situations such as facing the people in the crowd who appeared before the inquiry team and recorded statements supporting the allegations and charges of corruption against the participant.

The participant defended all the charges raised thereupon with documentary evidence. He went through these inquiries for a long period of four years to get cleared himself. It was not the end of his miseries as they filed appeals against the inquiries findings in the Honorable High Court with the same stance. The participant successfully defended there as well. The member parliament got issued participant's transfer orders on Chief Minister's directive at a remote and far furlong school. The participant succeeded to get that order withdrawn. He was once again transferred to a border area school. The locality of the school was much isolated it seemed almost unapproachable for the participant at that time because a transport facility was available within the river belt. It was a message from the member parliament.

The participant opted to resist and appealed against transfer orders in Provincial Services Tribunal. After one and half years his appeal was rejected as the tribunal stated that the participant had already completed his three years tenure in the same school and should obey the transfer orders. The participant was promoted to the next grade meanwhile and he joined the school of his own choice. The participant narrated:

"A head teacher can't resist such pressures from the community, politicians, and high-ups to maintain his stance. He rather has to pay in return facing defamation, financial loss, health issues, and other like these."

Internal pressures

As described by the participants of the study, internal pressures are the pressures that are related mainly to the internal community of the staff such as teaching, non-teaching, and supporting staff.

A male Participant 'TM' working in a rural area school having eight years of headship experience, disclosed that the local teachers who have connections with the local community and colleagues, often challenge head teachers if they are not accommodated of their accordingly or they feel the assigned duties and targets contrary to their will. Some teachers launch lobbying within staff and community to get their desired favors. They enjoy the full support of the community and staff members. Such teachers always create hurdles for headteachers with the support of the community when there is a contradiction in the opinion

which badly affects the performance of the institution. Teachers with poor performance and overstay at the same station, often indulge in such activities.

A female participant 'AM' with seven years of headship experience, working in an urban area school, stated that she faces a departmental inquiry due to the higher drop-out rate of 10th-class students. Teachers' face-saving behavior was the cause behind it as they struck off the slow learner students to improve the results of upcoming terminal exams. She further elaborated that she had joined headship just months earlier and was unfamiliar with teachers' behavior they assumed to improve their results in the BISEs exam of the 10th class.

Classin-charge teachers of the 10th class approached her and argued to allow struck-off names of slow learner students as they were a threat to a school in upcoming 10th class board exam results. They argued with the participant in such an effective manner that she allowed them as they wished. The school scored 100% results in the BISE exams. The participant appreciated the result and the teachers as well for their remarkable performance.

A week later or so the participant was served a show-cause notice from the department about the higher drop-out rate of the 10th class. Teachers had dropped out more than 50% of enrolled students from each section of the 10th class although they were allowed 10%. They dropped the majority of the students in the 10th class who failed the 9th class exam. They did so to improve the upcoming terminal exam results. The participant was called for departmental inquiry from authorities at the top level, as the dropout rate soared up to 50% above.

The participant was served a show-cause notice under PEEDA Act 2006. Being a novice head teacher, it was much hard for the participant to defend his position, she felt helpless because she had taken a wrong decision on the teachers' demand and they crossed the mandate while interpreting his permission for the sake of their own face-saving. The participant had to face departmental inquiry for two years. It was a very bitter experience for her though she was exonerated from inquiry, as he remarked:

"I will never forget this experience. I learned how to deal with teachers rather than having blind trust in them."

'SK' another female participant with seven years of headship experience and posted in a rural school, felt depressed about the non-co-operative attitude of teachers as she described when she discusses and assigns duties to teachers to manage the things to accomplish assignments as directed by authorities, they pretend different ways like [It is much difficult, how can we do it]. They feel that the head teacher is solely responsible for all assignments and only she is accountable for being a defaulter. They consider the head teacher to be responsible for all. On the other hand, senior teachers who are with least qualifications and are incapable to teach effectively within the new curriculum, resist strongly if the participant asks to test some of the new teaching approaches for an effective teaching-learning process. They start the campaign within the staff, they motivate new teachers with higher qualifications to work at a low pace and often they succeed in their campaign. Novice teachers start following their instructions. Such teachers resist change and they are not eager to accept any change as the participant revealed:

"They pressurize head teachers in many ways like threatening of applying for transfer or retirement because of head teacher's harsh and rude behavior if such teachers are handled strictly. The headteacher is compelled to go on the back foot for the sake of his/her own face-saving. This is a routine matter in schools. The lower mental level of such teachers is the main reason for such attitudes".

'FR', a male Participant with six years of headship experience and working in an urban area school indicated that he is always in trouble while dealing with C-IV employees as they are unwilling to work. He feels awkward reminding them of their well-defined duties time and again, Class-IV employees have always been troublesome, as they are used to doing less or no work during most parts of their service. They have thousands of excuses whenever he asks them to accomplish some assignment. Sometimes I feel as if I am impolite for not believing their excuses and feel guilty on my part. Very soon it is proved that I was deceived as one of their colleagues informs innocently: "He was not sick; he was just excusing for availing leave."

For achievement of the department targets regarding PMIU indicators like cleanliness, dengue surveillance Covid-19 SOPs, etc the head teacher has to put them to work. These employees pretend many ways to execute assignments, if the head teacher asks them politely, if he is strict; he faces resistance from C-IV employees in many ways. They approach the community, and local politicians to complain about the

harsh and cruel attitude of the head teacher. The head teacher often receives a call from a local politician or notable amongst the community to give space to the employee [spare him from work]. The participant proclaimed:

“They are not interested in their duties; they are not self-motivated to do the task assigned to them. They are rather interested in drawing their salary irrespective of what their assignments and liabilities are and to which extent these are being fulfilled. They like to serve those who had got them employed. I feel very awkward to put such people at work.”

The above findings of the study affirm that the head teacher experiences many external pressures and political interference from the community and if the head teacher is unable to accommodate their demands, he has to face media trials, departmental inquiries, and fake litigation. One of the participants was transferred to a remote area as a sentence. It is affirmed by the above study findings that head teachers constantly experience both external and internal pressures from teaching and non-teaching staff. It was revealed from stories of head teachers that they face pressures in form of lobbying and non-cooperative behavior from both teaching and non-teaching staff. They seek support sometimes from community and political figures to stress the head teachers for their demands. Class-IV employees, as well practice the same routine.

Discussion

The findings of the present research affirm previous findings of Armenta and Reno, 1997; Wells et al., 2011; Williamson and Campbell, 1987, showing that school administrators face many career-related challenges. The pressures experienced by school heads are common irrespective of the different school reforms and initiatives introduced over the years and thus, must be addressed. As mentioned by some of the participants, the causes of stress for school heads, like continuous change, bureaucracy, parents, and students, are inevitable. School heads are incapable to control their behaviors and change certain situations, tasks, or responsibilities.

One of the stressors as mentioned by the participants is the pressure they face from their community, overall. They are public figures within the local community whose behavior is played out in front of all school stakeholders. They are expected to be fully responsible for any conflict, misunderstanding, or mistake that takes place in their buildings.

Although they had learned a lot to deal with certain stressors through practical experience, however, the principals acknowledged that they still face irresistible situations that are hard to deal with and for which they feel helpless. It is worth mentioning that the head teachers cited how electronic media influenced their work. Furthermore existent research affirms that school leaders play an important role in school effectiveness and school climate (Duttweiler and Hord, 1987; Fullan, 2016; Hallinger, 2003; Lezotte and Bancroft, 1985; Venezky and Winfield, 1979). During the interviews, school heads expressed a sense of surrender or helplessness to their situations. One of the most troublesome challenges for the head teachers during their service appeared to be the pressure groups. They had to deal with two types of pressure groups i.e. (a) internal pressure groups which included supporting staff and teaching staff who challenge the head teachers with lobbying and involving political and community figures to get their demands contented, (b) external pressure groups, which comprise the community, political figures, and parents.

The grisly role of the community acts as the pressure group as community members compel the head teachers in many different ways. They blackmail the head teachers, report false cases against them, threaten them with force, and involve political figures to try to get the head teacher suspended because of personal antipathies. The mental condition of the head teachers deteriorates and they cannot actively work for the betterment of the school and the level of quality education decreases. We found out that many of our participants had to fight in the courts and in front of general public meetings to prove themselves innocent against false allegations charged by community members.

We found out that teachers mainly exert internal pressures as they combine forces with community members to get their desired favors achieved. If refused, they start lobbying with staff and community members against the head teacher. They don't hesitate to file fabricated applications and charge allegations against the head teacher in the office of higher authorities. Teachers even manage situations leading to departmental inquiries against the head teacher. Our research participants narrated that sometimes such planned activities of teachers cause stress and medical issues for them and it becomes difficult for them to get themselves out of this predicament. Female respondents stated that teachers' behavior is very non-professional and non-cooperative when they are asked about the targets to be achieved; they just have pleasant excuses. They don't collaborate with the head teacher to achieve the school targets. (Asch, 1999;

Sinatra, 2000).

Conclusion

We found out that these challenges include pressure groups i.e., internal pressures from teaching and supporting staff and external pressures from higher-ups, community members, and political figures, policy restraints, inadequate facilities available to schools, shortage of human resources, inadequate availability of financial resources, the bureaucratic attitude of higher-ups, negative attitude and irresponsible behavior of parents and community members, and legal proceedings and court issues. Internal pressure groups pressurize head teachers by lobbying, emotional blackmailing, deceiving behaviors, sluggish attitudes towards teaching and working, and involving political figures to threaten them. External pressure groups such as parents and the general public put pressure on head teachers through ways such as reporting a fake case against head teachers, directly giving life threats to them, transferring to remote areas, suspension threats, and expressing unbearable behavior towards head teachers.

This study highlighted the pressure groups; the school heads experience in their everyday professional life that creates hurdles in their routine administration and curb their performance. The findings of this study reveal that pressure groups have negative implications on school performance and must be addressed. How do we address the inhibitors that school administrators experience? There is a need to attend to their demands to empower the head teacher to ensure the achievement of quality education in developing a positive school culture for students to flourish. Future research is recommended with multiple methodological paradigms to identify further the school heads' work dynamics in various contexts and how pressure groups be curtailed accordingly.

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