

An Analysis of Principals' Interventions for School Effectiveness: Principals' Perspectives

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Abstract

It was a descriptive research that attempted to investigate principals' perspectives about their interventional role for school effectiveness in Government Girls' High Schools at Secondary level in Peshawar City. The population of the study included 18 principals/headmistresses of Government Girls' High Schools. All the 18 (100%) principals were included in study. The data were collected through closed-ended questionnaire based on Five Likert Point Scale and were given both qualitative and quantitative treatment by using statistically technique of simple method of frequency distribution and were converted into simple percentages duly supported by graphic presentations. The conclusions drawn from the study high lighted that school effectiveness owed itself to capable principals, committed staff, non-political intervention, setting democratic environment conducive to teaching learning process. The recommendations for improving interventional role of principals were to ensure instructional supervision, positive feedback to teachers, promote pedagogical skills of teachers and update their own administrative managerial skills last but not the least, involving parents in school-based activities.

Keywords: Education, Public schools, Secondary schools, School principals, Leadership.

Introduction

Principals at public schools are those who are designated as such by competent authority and mandated to exercise the delegated powers by some rules or administrative orders of the Education Department in case of government institutions and by the management. They occupy a position of central influence over the professionalization that concern teaching learning process in any form that leads to educational development. They are responsible for all the activities that take place in schools. Their managerial

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and leadership skills provide feedback and support to working teachers through their professional feedback.

School principals are the threshold guardians of their schools. They are responsible for both formal or informal outcome of their schools, which include evaluating support staff; facilitating teachers for effective teaching; communicating their vision in the form of objectives and interaction with parents about the school and their children. However, one thing is clear that principal is a member of the staff but the staff is not principal, and this distinguishes the role of the two entities.

Heads were facilitators to ensure overall success of the school. The visions and role performance of heads were focused on a couple of important consideration that included the welfare and overall development of students and school staff. Their objectives of schools were not ambiguous and their communications were properly registered by teachers and other stakeholders in education.¹

School principals motivated teachers and students for performance of moral obligations by way of developing trust and positive relationship and commitment to achieve common goals based on shared beliefs of stakeholders.²

Small number of school principals encouraged professionalism in their schools. Principals with low score were generally those who did not provide support and guidance for teaching learning process. Those principals were rated effective, who nurtured and sustained a professional teacher community.³

Principals should provide opportunities for support staff to perform leading roles. They should motivate them to work in collaboration with each other in decision making. They should learn the art of creating and facilitating the process of distributing leadership in order to have committed teachers, which was a crucial determinant for school effectiveness.⁴

Research on school principals identified different factors that contributed to the excellence in schools. Notwithstanding; the emphasis always remained on quality of teaching for which school principals were considered key persons to improve.⁵ The autonomy of schools required principals to reconcile the old tradition of stakeholders' expectations with the new ones and meet the dominant demand of parents to improve test results.⁶

Secondary Education

“Secondary Education has a vital role to play in any programme of education for the community. It provides teacher for both

elementary and adult education. It also prepares pupils for the Universities and other institutions of higher education. Besides, it is the stage, which in all countries marks the completion of education for the vast majority. Even the minority which goes for higher education cannot take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Universities unless they have received their grounding in a system of sound secondary education.”⁷

According to the National Education Policy (1998-2010) secondary stage of education constitutes an important vertical link with other tiers of education. It is the finishing ground for a substantial number of students who cannot reach college level and have to be absorbed in the economy. It is therefore, imperative that secondary education should reflect quality and practicability. Unfortunately, the quality of our secondary education is conspicuously lower than international standards.⁸

Secondary School Principals

The secondary school principals were primarily responsible to ensure full utilization of their human resources. The responsibilities of the principals were the achievement of school objectives by involving other persons throughout the process.⁹

For years secondary school heads were recognized important to raise the school to the apex of excellence. However, strong evidence based on research was not available to support this statement. The quality of principals affected school outcomes. It was based on their vast experience; knowledge of the different responsibilities performed by them and the skills about the proper allocation of resources.¹⁰

Interventional Role of Principals

The interventional role of school principals has considerably changed and the emphasis is now on how they intervene to improve learning style of students by providing them with effective feedback and ensuring that the students score high in achievement tests and meet their different learning needs. Simultaneously, principals were expected to take care of the discipline problems of students. The managerial responsibilities of principals have also increased and they are made responsible to meet the expectations of all stake holders in the school educational programmes.¹¹

The multi-dimensional role of the principals and performance with the needed skills led schools to improvement according to many expectations from them by the school

community.¹² Principals play different roles as compared to the role of teachers but simultaneously principals were also staff members. The staff does not perform the functions of principals. The focus of the principals and the teachers should be on consideration that students learned more effectively.¹³

Effective School

Effective schools are the institutions, which show the extent or degree, to which educational goals have been achieved. School effectiveness is ensured when schools meet the high expectations of society by virtue of their accomplishment that is acceptable to the stakeholders in education. However, school effectiveness is achieved gradually through the continuous efforts of the principals and staff for improving the quality and effectiveness of their schools by providing conducive environment that ensures proper teaching learning process.

The literature on school effectiveness commonly records principals as critical contributors to school success while it seems confronting to think such a causal relationship exists; remarkably little is known about the importance and contribution of effective principal ship to the overall success of a school. The claim seems to rest more on apparent logic than research.¹⁴

If school effectiveness is to be better understood and improved, careful attention need to be paid to high-quality performance. In so far as principals may have a role to play in school effectiveness, investigation of aspects needs to be made of effective principal ship that may enhance the performance of incumbents and thereby perhaps the success of the schools they lead.

Research on effective schools identified characteristics of effective principal which included a principal who is strong, purposeful and involved, provide effective monitoring and supervision, possessing leadership skills, maintain students discipline and greater cooperation between principal and among teachers and effective parental involvement.¹⁵

Positive school climate is considered as essential element for effective schools, which is effected by the interventional role of principals who take the responsibilities upon themselves to provide such environment to the schools that was conducive to proper teaching process. This is shown by the interrelationship between the principals' behaviour, school climate and school effectiveness. Principals performed this role for improving the learning and work

climate by creating conditions and use of different roles including, but not restricted to, the school home relationship.¹⁶

School effectiveness depended on the interventional role of a principal, the support of the teaching staff for implementing the clear vision and plan of activities in line with the school programme of curriculum implementation; regular appraisal of the work of pupils in order to make programme more effective and promote students achievement. This will require formulation of action plan and setting school climate for achieving objectives and efficient management of school finances improving the programme of study and students achievement, and having specific maintenance of students' discipline.¹⁷

Principals' Interventions

Principals are considered as important contributors for school effectiveness. They intervene for school effectiveness by engaging themselves in school activities, promoting collegial environment, completion of courses and vision that focus on academics, take corrective measures on the spot and provide assistance to teachers through their professional feedback. It is therefore, of paramount importance for the principals to play their role effectively that is why the interventions of principals go a long way to take the school to the apex of excellence.¹⁸

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the current interventional role of principals for school effectiveness.
- To find out how do principals' actions contribute to school effectiveness.
- To make recommendations for improving the current interventional role of principals'.

Delimitation of the Study

The scope of the study was delimited to Government Girls' High School urban areas of Peshawar City, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. Rural areas and Boys' High Schools both in Government and private sectors were excluded from the purview of this study.

Methodology

It was a descriptive study, which explored different dimensions of principals' interventional role for school effectiveness. The population of the study included all the 18 government girls' high

schools and 18 principals of Peshawar City, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan).

Sample

The sample of study included all the 18 (100%) principals.

Tools

The study used closed-ended questionnaire using 5 point rating scale comprised of 38 items for principals in order to collect relevant data. The primary data were collected from principals through questionnaire while secondary data were collected from office record, documents and review literature.

The rapport with participants was established with an introductory letter given by the research supervisor. The opinionnaire was personally delivered and explained to the subjects. This approach also established rapport with them. The researcher faced no problem to establish rapport with principals of Government Girl's High Schools, who were respondents in the study. There was also no difficulty in delivering the opinionnaires and the discussion with respondents. The significance of the study and its usefulness for policy decisions were explained to respondents with the assurance that their suggestions would be kept confidential and used only for research purpose. With these assurances the respondents willingly supported the study.

Pilot Testing

The questionnaire was pre-tested by 10 principals who were not part of the actual study. They were refined on the basis of suggestions received.

Data Collection

The number of respondents was 18 who were given five choices and their responses were obtained on the traditional scale of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The study used both qualitative and quantitative techniques of research. The qualitative data were collected through closed-ended questionnaire. Simple frequency distribution and percentage was used for quantitative data duly supported by graphs.

Data analysis and Discussion

In order to get a clear picture about the objectives, one method is to summarize all the 38 statements of the opinionnaire in 08 statements as given below:

- i). The principal should have the clear vision about the school, staff and students.
- ii). The principal should be knowledgeable, cooperative and decisive.
- iii). The principal should be in contact with students and parents.
- iv). The principal should enhance the community relationship.
- v). The principal should check the performance of teachers and point out their strengths and weaknesses.
- vi). The principal should prepare and maintain the school record properly.
- vii). The principal should have clear plans about the physical & instructional facilities.
- viii). The principal should be a role model.

Table-1: Principals should have Clear Vision about School, Staff and Students (1.1 to 1.4)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	72
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	29	40.3
Agree	42	58.3
Un Decided	1	1.4
Total	72	100.0

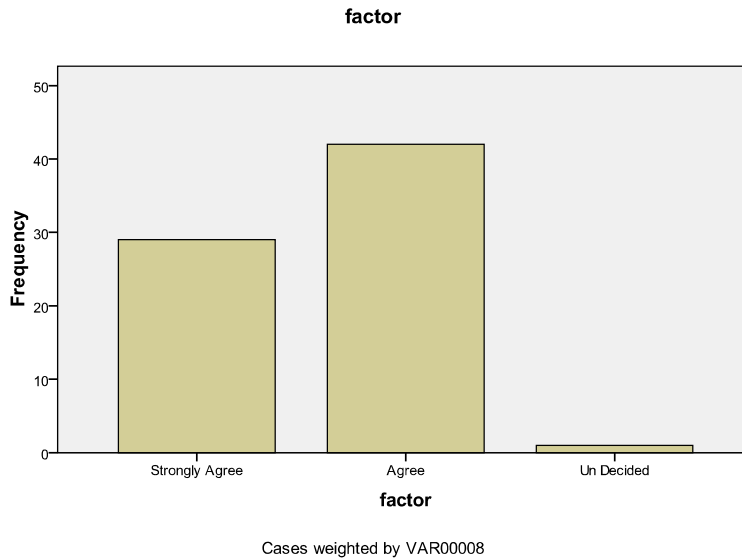


Figure-1: Principals should have Clear Vision about School, Staff and Students

The analysis of data in Table-1 revealed that the frequency of principals responses of 'strongly agreed' was 29 (40.3%) while 'agreed' were 42 (58.3%). The frequency of 'undecided' responses was 01 (1.4%). The response of 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' was zero. The overall position of the analysis is that majority of responses e.g more than 98% supported given statement. The data were further reflected in Figure-1.

Table-2: Principals should be Knowledgeable, Cooperative and Decisive (2.1 to 2.9)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	162
	Missing	0
Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	100	61.7

Agree	57	35.2
Un Decided	5	3.1
Total	162	100.0

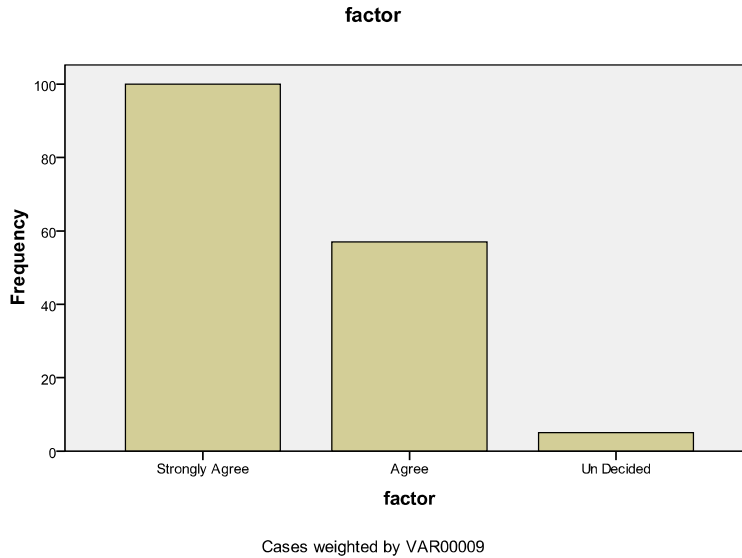


Figure-2: Principals should be Knowledgeable, Cooperative and Decisive

The analysis of data in Table-2 indicated that frequency of 'strongly agreed' responses were 100 (61.07%) and 57 (35.2%) were 'agreed'. The frequencies of 'undecided' responses were 05 (3.1%) while responses of 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' were zero. The analysis revealed that the given statement was supported by majority of the responses e.g more than 96%. The data were also illustrated in Figure-2.

Table-3: Principals should be in Contact with Students and Parents (3.1 to 3.7)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	126
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	73	57.9
Agree	50	39.7
Disagree	3	2.4
Total	126	100.0

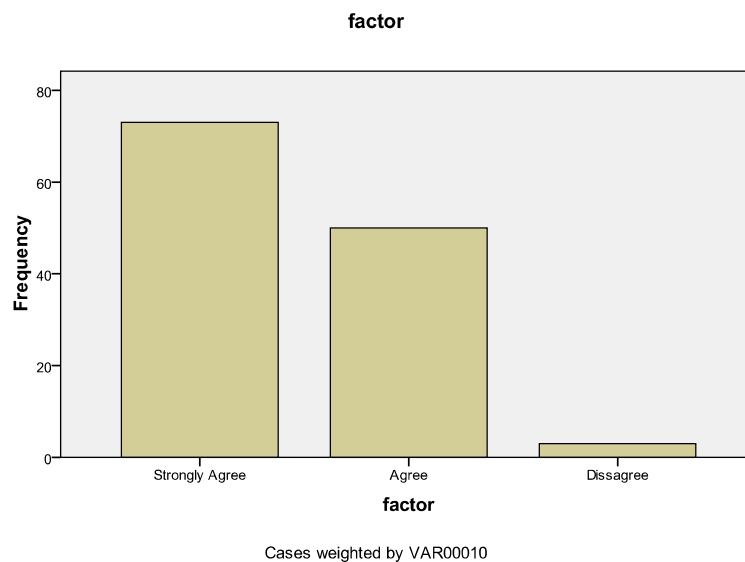


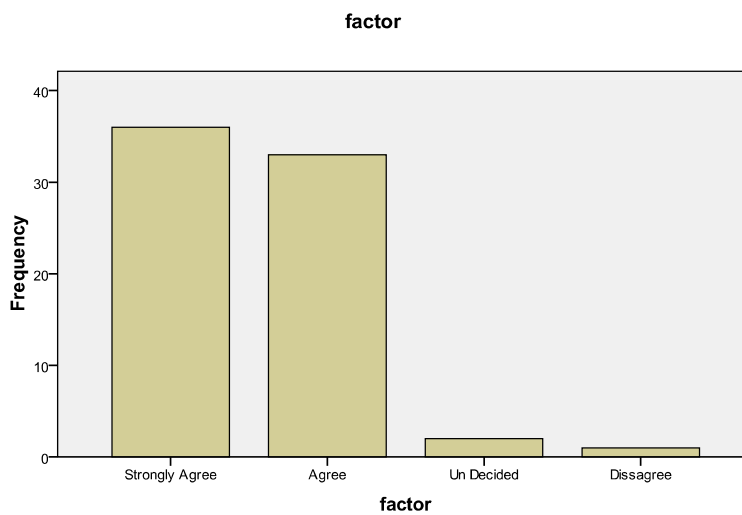
Figure-3: Principals should be in Contact with Students and Parents

The analysis of data in Table-3 showed that the frequency of 'strongly agreed' responses was 73 (57.9%) and 'agreed' responses were 50 (39.7%). The 'undecided' received zero response. However, the frequency of 'disagreed' responses was 03 (2.4%) and 'strongly disagreed' received zero response. Thus majority e.g more than 96% responses supported the given statement. Figure-3 made the data further meaningful.

Table-4: Principals should enhance the Community Relationship (4.1 to 4.4)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	72
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	36	50.0
Agree	33	45.8
Un Decided	2	2.8
Disagree	1	1.4
Total	72	100.0



Cases weighted by VAR00011

Figure-4: The Principals should enhance the Community Relationship

The analysis of data in Table-4 revealed that frequency of 'strongly agreed' responses was 36 (50.0%) while 'agreed' responses were 33 (45.8%) However, 'undecided' responses were 02 (2.8%) The

frequency of 'disagreed' response was 01(1.4%). And 'strongly disagreed' received zero response. The crux of the analysis is that majority e.g. more than 95%, responses supported the given statement. The data were further clarified in Figure-4.

Table-5: Principals should check the Performance of Teachers and Point Out their Strengths and Weaknesses (5.1 to 5.7)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	126
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	71	56.3
Agree	50	39.7
Un Decided	2	1.6
Disagree	3	2.4
Total	126	100.0

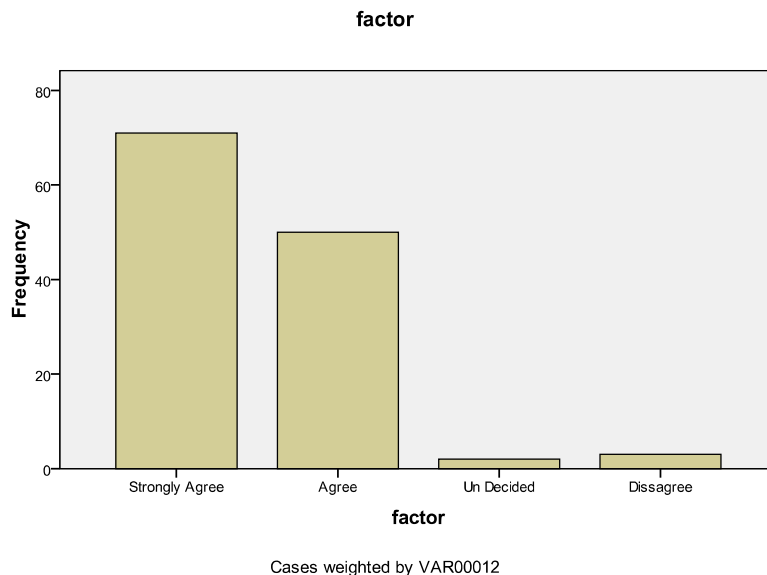


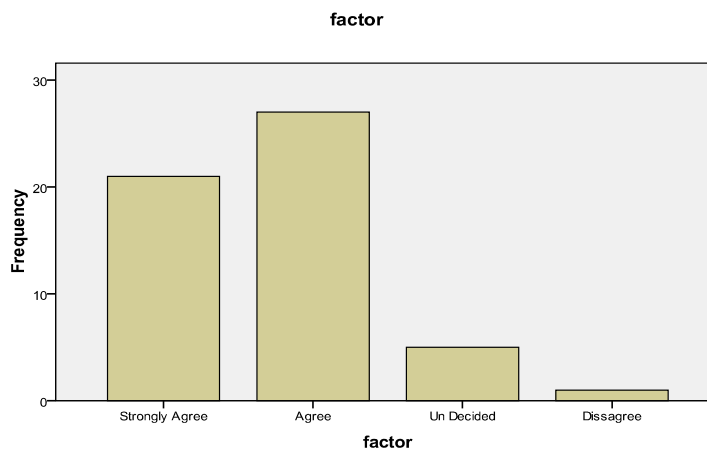
Figure-5 Principals should check the Performance of Teachers and Point Out their Strengths and Weaknesses

The analysis of data in Table-5 revealed that the frequency of “strongly agreed” responses was 71 (56.3%) and ‘agreed’ responses were 50 (39.7%). While ‘undecided’ responses were 2 (1.6%). The frequency of “disagreed” responses were 3 (2.4%) and ‘strongly disagreed’ received zero response. The statement was supported by majority e.g. more than 95% of responses. The data were further depicted in Figure-5.

Table-6: Principals should Prepare and Maintain the School Record properly (6.1 to 6.3)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	54
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	21	38.9
Agree	27	50.0
Un Decided	5	9.3
Disagree	1	1.9
Total	54	100.0



Cases weighted by VAR00013

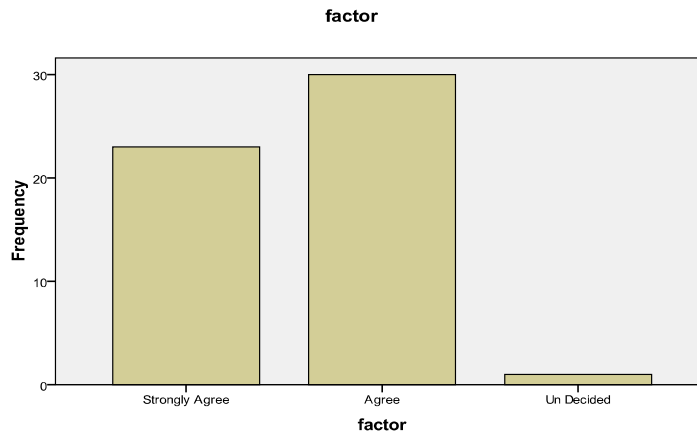
Figure-6: Principals should Prepare and Maintain the School Record Properly

The analysis of data in Table-6 highlighted the frequency of 'strongly agreed' responses was 21 (38.9%) while 'agreed' responses were 27 (50.0%). The 'undecided' responses were 5 (9.3%). The response of 'disagreed' was 01 (1.9%) and 'strongly disagreed' received zero response. Thus the overall position was that majority e.g more than 88% responses supported the given assumption. The data were further showed in Figure-6.

Table-7: Principals should have Clear Plan about the Physical and Instructional Facilities (7.1 to 7.3)

Statistics		
Factor		
N	Valid	54
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	23	42.6
Agree	30	55.6
Un Decided	1	1.9
Total	54	100.0



Cases weighted by VAR00014

Figure-7: Principals should have Clear Plan about the Physical and Instructional Facilities

The analysis of data in Table-7 showed that the frequency of 'strongly agreed' responses was 23 (42.6%) while 'agreed' responses were 30 (55.6%). However, the frequency of 'undecided' response was 01(1.9%). The responses of 'disagreed' and 'strongly agreed' were zero. Overall position was that the assumption was accepted by the majority e.g. more than 97% responses. The data were further illustrated in Figure-7.

Table-8: Principals should be a Role Model (8)

Statistics		
factor		
N	Valid	18
	Missing	0

Factor		
Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	10	55.6
Agree	8	44.4
Total	18	100.0

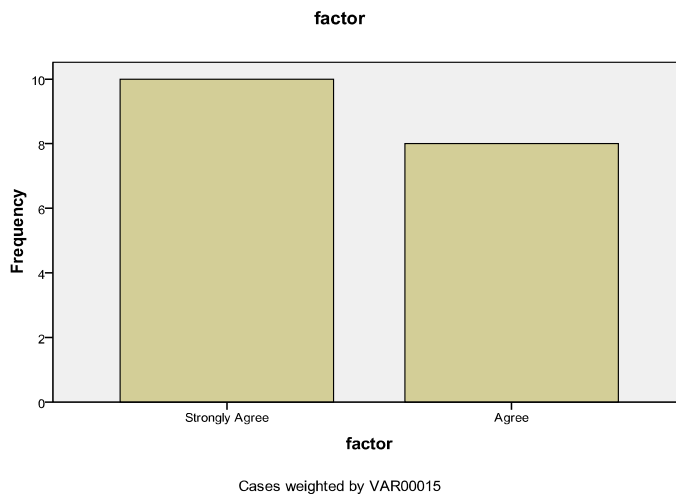


Figure -8: Principals should be a Role Model

The analysis of data in Table-8 disclosed the frequency of 'strongly agreed' responses was 10 (55.6%) while 'agreed' responses were 08(44.4%). The 'undecided', 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' received zero response. The crux of the analysis was that majority e.g. more than 99% responses supported the given statement. The data were further revealed in Figure-8.

Conclusion

It was found that principals could help in school effectiveness by virtue of some traits and characteristics including clear vision; involving staff in decision-making about school and students; providing democratic environment to teachers; following clear rules and regulations about duties for teachers and discipline of students; arranging refresher courses for teachers; ensuring effective supervision and monitoring; and providing incentives to teachers and students for their good performance; involving parents in school-based activities; developing strategy for school improvement; promoting school-community relationship; ensuring the availability of all types of resources for effective teaching; making optimum use of available resources and performing as change agent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions and review of literature, this study made the following recommendations:

- Principals' interventional role can be made more effective if they happen to be competent; innovative; visionary; equipped with all necessary leadership and managerial skills.
- Effective monitoring and supervision are the tools of principals to ensure smooth functioning of school activities.
- It is necessary for the interventional role of principals to set school climate conducive to effective teaching learning process; develop collegial and cooperative relationships and simultaneously discourage adversarial tendencies.
- Principals can intervene in school effectiveness by sharing their visions with all stakeholders particularly communities and parents in school-based activities.
- In order to promote balanced personalities of students, principals' interventions should focus on the physical,

moral, emotional and cognitive development of students, which will certainly add grace to their personalities.

- The government may allocate adequate funds to principals of government high schools to enable them to hold co-curricular activities necessary for school effectiveness but in such cases, priority will be given to students' welfare and gains; proper school discipline; punctuality of teachers and students; providing access to uncovered children; making efforts to reduce dropout and repetition rate.
- Principals can also bring about improvement in school effectiveness by arranging refresher courses and updating the pedagogical skills of their teachers in different subjects.
- Principals in collaboration with teachers can take the school to the apex of excellence. It is, therefore, necessary that principals through their inter-personal skills make the staff to believe in them, support and follow them in order to face growing challenges of secondary education.

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