The Role of School Leadership Practices In School Culture; A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Effective leadership practices are important for the success of every organization. Therefore, this study is based on a systematic literature review to highlight the studies emphasizing the role of school leadership practices in shaping the culture. The articles published within the last 5 years (i.e. from 2018 to 2022) were considered for this review. The review was conducted using the SQAT and general review conducting method. The results revealed that the majority of research articles were empirical in nature and published in 2018 and 2019. This research is a guide for researchers aiming to conduct research on school leadership practices. Future studies can emphasize the specific leader style or conduct a review of studies published within the last 10 years.

Keywords: School Leadership, Leadership, Culture, Schools, Principal Leadership, School Administrator.

1. Introduction

The term leadership was added to the English language two Hundred years ago and since then many researchers are aiming to define it in different contexts. Bass and Stogdill (1990) defined it as "an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members". Omolayo (2007) highlighted it as a social process that influences the actions of subordinates in attaining organizational objectives. Leadership styles and behaviors can affect the performance or performance-related factors of organizations. These behaviors can include, democratic, autocratic, contingency strategy, and the task or people-oriented personality. Lewin et al., (1939) conducted the first study on leaders and behaviors and explained autocratic leaders as those who centralized authority. Whereas, democratic

leaders encourage participation and delegate authority to colleagues (Patterson, 2010). A leader is the one who can drive the organization towards success but many leaders are unable to manage the institutions (Khanal et al., 2020) due to barriers. The leaders of schools can develop a learning and growing culture which can ultimately help the institute in its rapid growth. There are leadership styles including ethical, responsible, Islamic, transformational, authentic, transactional, and participative but it's important to know which leadership in the context of school can help to develop a strong culture.

Each school has its own culture that directs and guides people in their institution. Culture is viewed as being one of the most stable and dominant elements of an organization. The rapid change in the education system put schools under pressure in terms of implementing the new policies which cause school culture to change

along with the changes in the education system. "Organizational culture, which forms the basis of the concept of school culture, has become popular in scientific management literature focusing on organizational performance, productivity, managerial effectiveness, and organizational behaviors" (Karadağa, Kilicoglo & Yilmazc, 2014, p.104). There is no ideal definition of school culture, but in general, there are views and perceptions about what good school culture involves. School culture contains aspects such as knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, norms, customs, and other skills (John, 2010). Burnham (2007) stated that school culture is the personality of the school, then a quality school culture will be able to show the level of interactions among the school community, management and leadership involved, principles and rules that are the foundation of the school constitutions, character, and student outcomes. Schools "have faced increasing new challenges in the 21st century, managerial leaders may need to follow decision-making processes that ingrain sustainable development concepts in both strategic and operational planning" (Oliveira, 2007). Also, "values reflect the philosophy, ideology, moral and ethical codes, goals, ideals, and standards of the organization, including basic essentials that provide judgments about what is right or wrong" (Karadağa, Kilicoglo &Yilmazc , 2014, p.104). Some challenges are simple, leaders can deal directly with them. Other challenges could be complex, they take more time and thought before a final decision can be made.

At every level, decision-making is the most important task for organizations (Li, 2008) and these decisions made by people differ according to circumstances or situations (Ejimabo, 2015). Similarly, at every level of an organization, the managers make decisions for survival or fulfilling the objectives of the organization (Al Shra'ah, 2015). Ejimabo (2015) described it as "the ability to make good and reasonable choices by selecting from the many alternative available options".

2. Literature Review

Having a common culture in a school depends on the presence and cohesiveness of an interacting group of individuals. A school with shared positive culture finds work and achieving goals easier. Therefore, school leadership plays a role in associating all induvial with the shared school culture. Turan and Bectas (2013), conducted a study that aims to determine the relationship between school leadership practices and school culture. The results of their highlighted that there are positive relationships between school culture and leadership practices. School culture can be used as a tool to influence and guide teachers therefore, it is important to improve and enhance the job definition and areas of work of school leadership.

Decision-making became an important element in schools as a result of the increase in challenges and problems in this era and schools need to make effective decisions to overcome the challenges. The people in leadership positions have to face the challenges of decisions making daily (Ejimabo, 2015) because it is not easy to make decisions without understanding the situations. Decision-making can be defined in different ways based on schools' and leaders' perspectives. According to Oliveira (2007) the decision is actually a response to a certain situation and it comprehends the evaluations, expectations, and judgments. Alike, Olcum & Titrek (2015) defined it as "decision making is a flexible behavior, which means that individuals may act and decide differently from each other in similar cases". Moreover, Ejimabo (2015) explained decision making as "a dynamic process of choosing from the best different alternatives and associated with the systemic act of making a choice". In the whole process of decision-making, the people make the best choice from several available options on the basis of current circumstances (Li, 2008). In addition, Li (2008) explained that decisions are different, some are simple others are complex, and all decisions are made based on three main activities: intelligence activity, design activity, and choice activity; therefore, people need to understand the situations that need decision making. Consequently, Al Shra'ah (2015) indicated that the process of decision-making relies on differences in the values, education, level, organization, and attitudes of managers. Therefore, a leader must know decisions based on the interests of all the stakeholders (Ejimabo, 2015).

In schools, the authority of decision making was in the hand of principals (Mokoena, 2011) but nowadays, because of having a shared vision within every school, the schools' administrators also involve the other experts in making decisions instead of making unilateral decisions (Androniceanu & Ristea, 2014). Ejimabo (2015) also highlighted the need for active involvement of employees in decision-making as they are the ones who implement the decisions. In this decision-making, the most important and necessary component is the tacit knowledge of the organizational stakeholders (Ballantyne, 2012). According to Ejimabo (2015), in this scenario school principals being leaders need to understand the organizational decision-making process and leadership must portray the future aligned with the vision. Therefore, understanding the whole entity and the growth of an organization is needed. Moreover, he assured that the process of decision making can help the leaders in solving problems and this process involves six important steps, 1- Defining the Problem, 2- Develop Alternatives, 3- Evaluate the Alternatives, 4- Make the Decision, 5- Implement the Solution and 6- Monitor your Solution.

Oliveira (2007), asserted that decision and behavior are the main characteristics of decision making. Both involve processes of thinking in order to react based on the situations and the external world. Based on his view, decision-making is integrated with our beliefs and values about certain issues or problems. On the other hand, school culture plays an important role in directing people inside the school. Schools are the requirement of societies and the culture in school is the important element to be implemented. This culture is influenced by teachers, administrators, and the interaction of students (Kartal, 2016). The culture teaches about preferences in life and it is demonstrated in the behaviors, thinking, and beliefs of people (Oliveira, 2007). In every organization, the culture exists, and it is shaped by different parameters including administrative practices, internal dynamics, and viewpoint of the workers about the organization (Kartal, 2016). Therefore, the organizational culture as a concept of leadership is the most vital component used by leaders to survive in dynamic organizations

(Madu,2012). Badri, Saribaglou, Ahrari, Jahadi & Mahmoudi (2014) found that the main characteristic of culture is its high stability (i.e. its hard to change and has strong resistance to environmental factors). The school principal's main task is to provide leadership in shaping the school's culture (Bipath, 2012).

## 3. Significance & Rationale

The leadership of the school's principal has a significant effect on organizational culture (i.e. school's culture) (Arif et al., 2019). There are several leadership styles and every style can influence the organizational culture. In particular, many studies in different contexts have supported the idea that leadership can play a positive role in shaping the organizational culture of different sectors including school education (Karadağ et al., 2018; Miller 2018; Liu et al., 2021; Bush, 2021; Kalkan et al., 2020), banking sector (Faeni et al., 2019) and SMEs (Ur Rehman et al., 2019). Over the decade, thousands of research articles have been published in the area of school leadership. This huge number of articles highlighted that there are several researchers who aimed to highlight the role of school leadership and leadership practices in shaping the culture of schools. Similarly, this research aimed to conduct a systematic review of articles (i.e. focusing on the articles published from 2018 to 2022) highlighting the role of school leadership in shaping culture. Furthermore, it has explored the other information from these articles including the types of articles, the approach to data collection, and geographical distribution.

4. Methodology

There are two main approaches to research, one is qualitative, and the other is quantitative, and some researchers also use the mix-method approach. Every qualitative research is based on different but specific concepts (Duffy and Chenail, 2009). There are several categories of qualitative research and a systematic literature review is one of them. The systematic literature review highlights the subjectivist paradigm supported by research (Campbell, 2014). Aljobaly & Banawi (2019) used a unique systematic literature review approach, that included the assessment of data, its interpretation,

and synthesized on the basis of past literature. The systematic literature review is significantly different from other approaches because it does not test the hypothesis or design any theory. It is conducted by using the concepts and pieces of evidence found from deep literature analysis. Vuori & Vaisanen, (2009) explained systematic literature review as "it is the valuable strategy when the aim is to identify, evaluate, and synthesize all of the important research on a certain topic to acquire a complete picture of the studies and their findings". In addition, this process has less risk of human biasness (Petticrew and Roberts, 2008). Therefore, due to immense significance, importance and credibility, this study is based on systematic literature review. The general process of the systematic literature review is shown in figure 1.
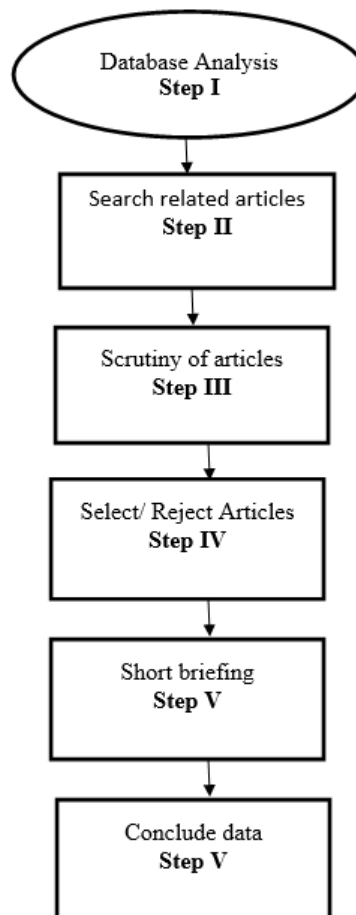
Figure 1: General process of systematic literature review

In first step the important databases are searched and then in second step the articles are searched with different keywords. When the relevant articles are found, they are sorted according their date of publication and relevancy. The irrelevant and old articles are removed from analysis. In fifth step, the short briefing about the result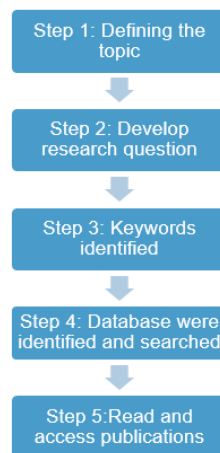s is provided. The detailed process of conducting systematic review is given in table 1. It has shown all the required information and also provided the detail of this study.

Table 1: Process of Conducting Systematic Literature Review

Sr. #	Elements	Information
1	Article Selection	Journal Articles on "role of school leadership in shaping culture" published between 2018 and 2022.
2	Research Questions	1-What is journals' publishing country? 2- What type of articles are included (i-e- conceptual or empirical)? 3- What were the main data collection methods adopted?
3	Determine search criteria "keywords"	Leadership, School Leadership, Organizational Culture, School Culture, Leadership Styles
4	Identify Databases and carryout search	Scopus, Ebscohot, Web of Science (ISI) and many others
5	Selection of articles	Articles published in English language Published in reputed journals Context is of school leadership
6	Synthesize articles	Critically assessment of included studies
7	Publicize review findings	The finding are based on the summary of data or current evidence.

This systematic literature review aimed to highlighted role of school leadership in shaping culture, and it included the latest research articles published within last five years (i.e. from 2018 to 2022). These articles were reviewed by using the important technique developed by Pickering and Bryne (2014), and it is known as "Systematic Quantitative Assessment Technique (SQAT)". First, this technique is useful in determining the addition and deletion of peer-reviewed English journal publications. Moreover, this technique helps the researchers to analyze the existing available literature and develop a summary of research areas. According to Zhu et al., (2018) this method helps in investigating the data collection methods, research article types, time distribution of research articles, and geographical distribution of articles. This research followed the following 5-steps procedure based on the SQAT technique (See, figure 2).

Step 1: Defining the topic

Step 2: Develop research question

Step 3: Keywords identified

Step 4: Database were identified and searched

Step 5:Read and access publications

Figure 2: 5 steps of SQAT

4.1. Criteria and Scrutiny

A deep analysis based on keywords provided several articles and from this list, the duplicate articles were removed. The keywords and search strings are given in table 2.

Table 2: Search Strings & Keywords

Sr. #	Search	Keywords
1	Search 1	Leadership and School Culture
2	Search 2	School Leadership & Culture
3	Search 3	Leadership Styles and Culture in Schools
4	Search 4	School Principal's leadership & Culture

In order to further specify the content, the abstract were read and relevant articles were scrutinized. The bibliography of majority of articles was scanned to gather additional information about related articles. The inclusion and exclusion criteria is given below:

4.1.1. Exclusion Criteria

• All the studies published before 2018 were not included.
• Duplicated studies were excluded.
• Studies other than school leadership or leadership in school context were not included.
• The studies published in other than the English language were also excluded.

4.1.2. Inclusion Criteria

• The studies published with last 5 years (i.e 2018 to 2022)

• All quantitative and qualitative studies were included.
• Studies across African region especial Nigeria were considered
• Studies within context were included.
• Studies in the English language were considered

After following the criteria, 56 articles were considered for the systematic literature review. The detailed outcome is shown in figure 3 and table 3 highlights the articles by publishers.
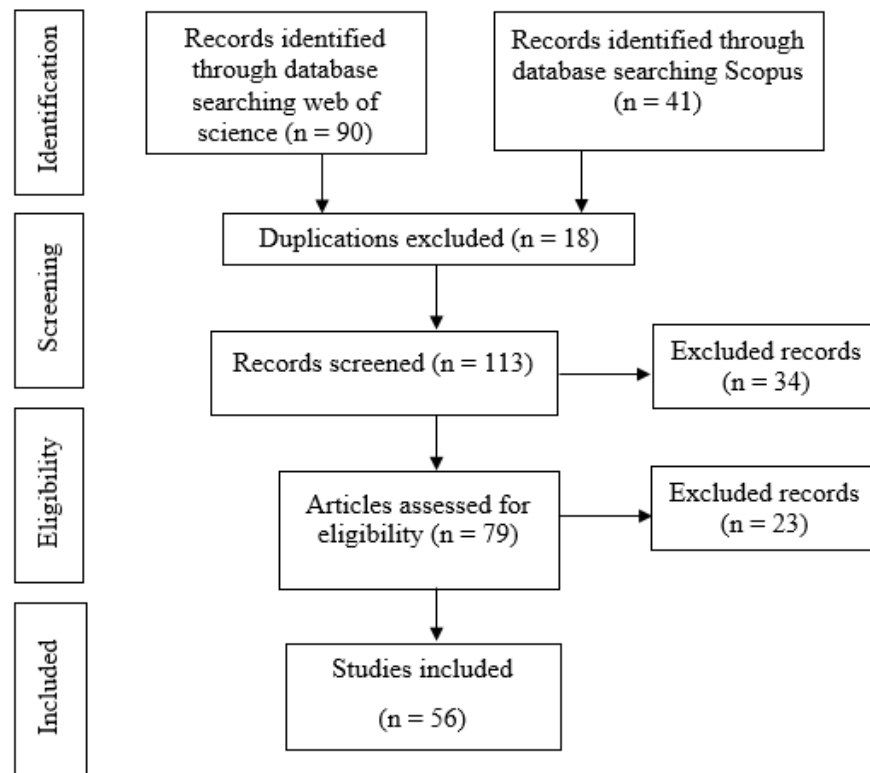
Figure 3: Articles distribution

Table 3: Articles by publishers

SR #	Publishers	Number of relevant articles
1	Springer	8
2	Elsevier	6
3	Taylor and Francis	1
4	Emerald	11
5	Sage	7
6	Other Publishers	23
	Total	**56**

The above shown table has highlighted that the majority of articles are published in non-renowned journals. 8 are were published by springer, 6 by Elsevier, 1 by T & F, 11 by emerald, 7 by sage publisher and 23 by other publishers.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Time distribution

The figure 4 shown below is highlighting the time distribution of articles. It has provided the information of articles published in last 5 years (i.e. from 2018 to 2022). According to criteria, no old article were considered. The figure has provided the frequency of articles published in each year. It is evident from the figure that 15 articles were published in 2018, 17 in 2019, 9 in 2020, 7 in 2021 and 8 in 2022. Majority of article were published in 2018 (i.e. 15 articles).
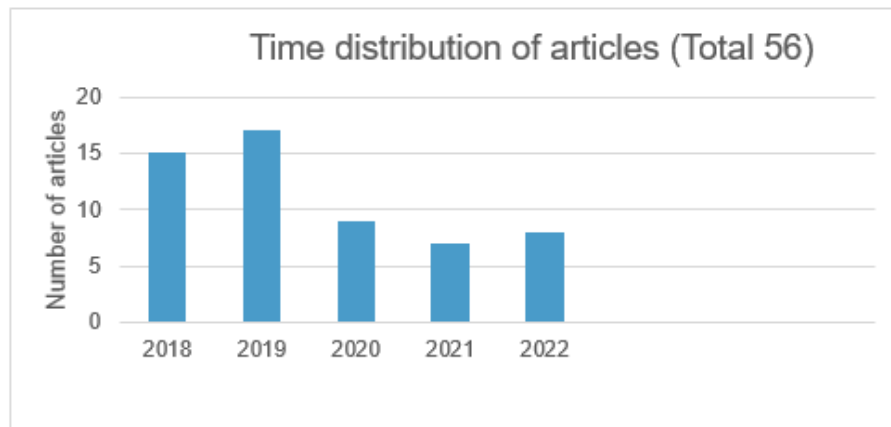
Figure 4: Time Distribution of Articles

5.2. Geographical distribution

In the context on country, this systematic review keep its main focus on Arab countries. Therefore, the studies related to Arab countries were also considered. It has not been specified that on which Arab country there are more studies but the comparison is shown between Arab and other countries. The figure 5, has shown that majority of studies were focusing the other countries instead of Arab world. This may be the reason of developed culture of schools in Arab countries. Among 56 total studies, the 40 were on other countries and 16 were in context of Arab countries.
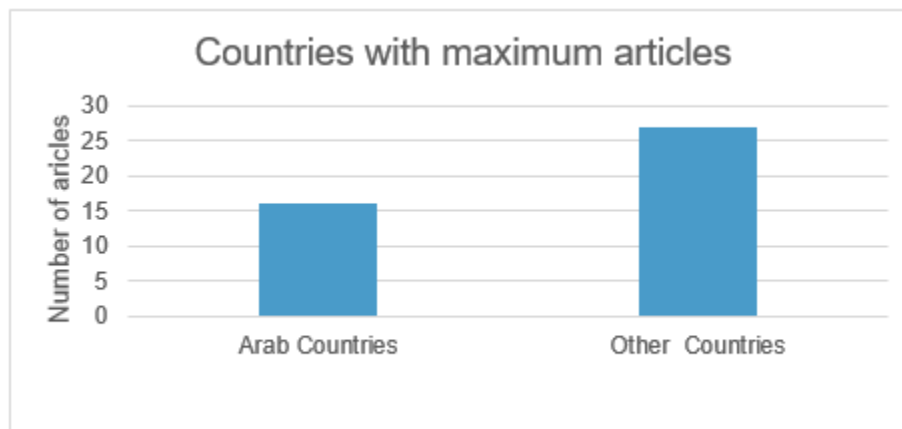
Figure 5: Geographical distribution

5.3. Types of Research & Data Collection

The articles were classified into empirical and conceptual articles. The researcher found that there were significant number of empirical articles (49 out of 56), while the remaining (6) were conceptual articles. The empirical articles gathered data by questionnaire. All these were based on primary data and no article was found on secondary data.

6. Conclusion

Leadership always remained a hot debate in the studies of organizational behavior but in last two decades, the concept of educational leadership is

being discussed by researchers of education. Therefore, this systematic literature review has discussed the studies published on school leadership and the leadership practices that can help in shaping the culture of schools. The review focused on studies published within the last 5 years, from 2018 to 2022. The results highlighted that majority of studies were published by less reputed publishers and they were emphasizing the school leadership of other countries. A few studies emphasized the Arab countries. Moreover, the results revealed that the majority

of studies have focused on survey techniques to identify the role of school leadership on culture.

7. Limitations & Recommendations

The systematic review conducted by this study is based on studies published between 2018 and 2022. Studies in the future can conduct a review of studies published in the last 10 years or more. In addition, this review is not limited to any country, thus, future studies can focus on any specific country or region.

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