



Leadership Styles of School Leaders and The Mental Health of Teachers in a University In Beijing, China

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between leadership styles exhibited by school leaders at Beijing University for Business Administration (BUBA) and the mental health of its teaching staff. BUBA, founded in 1994, has been dedicated to providing quality education for over 20 years and has received recognition and support from various sectors. The importance of teacher mental health in the teaching profession is emphasized, as teachers play a multifaceted role beyond imparting knowledge, impacting student outcomes and the overall quality of education. Teacher well-being is closely linked to student learning, and recognizing the mental health challenges teachers face is vital to prevent negative consequences for both educators and students. The research problem seeks to understand the relationship between leadership styles at BUBA and teacher mental health, with objectives that include examining leadership styles, assessing teacher mental health, investigating correlations, identifying contributing factors, and providing recommendations. The research methodology employs a qualitative approach, involving interviews with 10 teachers, to gain in-depth insights. The research findings reveal a diverse range of leadership styles at BUBA, impacting teacher mental health. Collaborative and supportive leadership styles are associated with positive teacher mental health, fostering a conducive work environment. Authoritarian and directive styles, on the other hand, contribute to stress and dissatisfaction among teachers. Factors within leadership styles, such as professional development and recognition, further influence teacher well-being. Recommendations include leadership development, transparent communication channels, and strategies to reduce workload pressures and promote well-being.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Teacher mental health, BUBA, Educational leadership

I. Introduction

1.1. Overview of Beijing University for Business Administration

Beijing University for Business Administration (BUBA) was founded in 1994 and has a history of 20 years. Over the past two decades, the university has played a pivotal role in shaping the future by educating nearly forty thousand outstanding graduates for society. BUBA adheres to the principles of lawful and ethical education, strict and standardized management, and scientific and harmonious development. Its remarkable achievements and consistent dedication have earned widespread praise from the government, educational authorities, and various sectors of society. Since 2007, BUBA has received continuous financial support totaling 3.57 million yuan from the Beijing Municipal Education Commission as part of its encouragement and guidance for education.

Situated within the academic and cultural ambiance of the Zhongguancun Changping Science and Technology Park, the university's campus spans over 80 acres with a built-up area of 80,000 square meters. The campus boasts modern facilities such as libraries, reading rooms, laboratories, student dormitories, cafeterias, bathing facilities, supermarkets, and sports fields. All the necessary teaching and living services are readily available, including 17 computer labs, four digital language classrooms, and 37 multimedia classrooms. With 19 specialized laboratories, BUBA provides a distinctive and modern higher education experience to students from all corners of the country.

1.2 The importance of mental health in the teaching profession

The teaching profession is a vital pillar of any education system, shaping the intellectual and emotional development of future generations. As educators, teachers shoulder the responsibility of imparting knowledge, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing the overall well-being of their students^[1]. However, the demands and challenges of the teaching profession can have a profound impact on the mental health of educators.

1.2.1 The Teacher's Multifaceted Role

Teachers undertake a multifaceted role that extends beyond the classroom. They are not only educators but also mentors, role models, and sources of emotional support for their students. Teachers often work in high-pressure environments, juggling diverse tasks such as curriculum development, lesson planning, student assessment, and classroom management^[2]. Their ability to connect with and inspire students is closely intertwined with their own mental and emotional well-being.

1.2.2. The Impact of Teacher Well-being on Student Learning

Research consistently demonstrates that teacher well-being directly influences student outcomes. When teachers experience high levels of stress, burnout, or mental health challenges, it can hinder their ability to effectively teach and



engage with students. Conversely, educators who are emotionally and mentally well-adjusted are better equipped to create a positive learning environment, establish meaningful connections with students, and facilitate successful learning experiences^[3].

1.2.3. Recognizing the Mental Health Challenges

Teaching can be emotionally taxing, as educators often encounter diverse student needs, behavioral challenges, and administrative pressures. The relentless demands of the profession, coupled with limited resources and support, can contribute to stress, anxiety, and burnout among teachers^[4]. It is essential to recognize and address these mental health challenges to prevent them from affecting both teachers and their students negatively.

1.2.4. The Ripple Effect on Educational Institutions

The mental health of teachers also has a ripple effect on the broader educational institution. When educators experience burnout or emotional exhaustion, it can lead to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, and a decline in the overall quality of education provided. Moreover, a high turnover rate among teachers due to mental health issues can disrupt the continuity of education and undermine the stability of educational institutions^[5].

2. Research Problem and Objectives

Research Question:

- What is the relationship between the leadership styles exhibited by school leaders at Beijing University for Business Administration and the mental health of teachers in the university?

Research Objectives:

- To examine the various leadership styles demonstrated by school leaders in Beijing University for Business Administration.
- To assess the mental health status and well-being of teachers working at Beijing University for Business Administration.
- To investigate the potential correlations between specific leadership styles and the mental health outcomes of teachers.
- To identify the factors within leadership styles that contribute to teacher well-being or may lead to mental health challenges.
- To provide recommendations and insights for enhancing the leadership approach within the university to promote the mental health and overall well-being of its teaching staff.

II. Literature Review

The relationship between leadership styles exhibited by school leaders and the mental health of teachers is an area of increasing interest and importance within the field of educational leadership. Educational institutions, including schools and universities, play a vital role in shaping not only the academic but also the psychological well-being of their teaching staff. Effective leadership is considered a cornerstone in creating a conducive and supportive work environment for teachers, and it has been found to have a profound impact on their mental health.

Leadership Styles in Education

Leadership in educational settings encompasses a wide range of styles, each with its unique characteristics and implications. Transactional leadership, characterized by a focus on task-oriented interactions, often involves rewards and sanctions based on performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In contrast, transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers, fostering their personal and professional growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Research indicates that transformational leadership is positively associated with teacher job satisfaction and well-being, while transactional leadership may lead to stress and dissatisfaction (Leithwood et al., 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Teacher Mental Health and Well-being

Teacher mental health and well-being are multifaceted constructs influenced by various factors, including workload, job satisfaction, burnout, and stress. Teacher burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, is a prevalent issue (Maslach et al., 2001). High levels of burnout can have detrimental effects on mental health and can lead to reduced teaching effectiveness and intentions to leave the profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Addressing teacher mental health is not only essential for individual well-being but also for the overall quality of education.

Impact of Leadership Styles on Teacher Mental Health

Several studies have examined the impact of leadership styles on teacher mental health. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational and supportive leadership behaviors, has been linked to increased teacher job satisfaction (Leithwood et al., 1994). Such leaders are often seen as mentors who provide emotional support and encourage professional growth (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). In contrast, transactional leadership, marked by a focus on rewards and punishments, may contribute to teacher stress and dissatisfaction (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Excessive monitoring and performance-based evaluations associated with transactional leadership can create pressures that negatively affect mental health (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

III. Research Methodology

The research methodology is carefully planned to investigate the relationship between leadership styles of school leaders and the mental health of teachers at Beijing University for Business Administration (BUBA). It employs a qualitative approach, which is aptly chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights and a nuanced understanding of the research problem. The qualitative methodology is structured into several key components to ensure the study's validity and reliability.

Firstly, the research approach begins with the selection of a purposive sample of 10 teachers from BUBA. This approach allows for the deliberate inclusion of teachers from diverse backgrounds, such as academic disciplines and years of teaching experience, ensuring a well-rounded representation of perspectives. By focusing on teachers with varying experiences with different leadership styles, the research aims to capture a comprehensive range of insights into how leadership impacts teacher mental health.

Secondly, the data collection process involves conducting semi-structured interviews with the selected teachers. The use of open-ended questions in an interview guide encourages participants to express their perceptions and experiences freely, ensuring a rich and detailed dataset. This approach aligns with the research objectives of gaining insights into how leadership styles influence teacher well-being and identifying the factors contributing to mental health challenges.

Thirdly, the data analysis stage employs thematic analysis, a systematic approach that allows for the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and key factors within the qualitative data. This analysis method enhances the rigor and reliability of the study by providing a structured framework for interpreting the interview responses. Additionally, maintaining detailed field notes and audio recordings, with participant consent, ensures accuracy and the ability to revisit the data during analysis.

IV. Research Findings

The study investigated the relationship between leadership styles exhibited by school leaders at Beijing University for Business Administration (BUBA) and the mental health of teachers in the university. The research findings are organized based on the research objectives outlined in the study.

- **Objective 1: Examination of Leadership Styles**

The qualitative interviews with 10 teachers at BUBA provided valuable insights into the various leadership styles demonstrated by school leaders. Teachers described a spectrum of leadership approaches, ranging from authoritative and directive styles to collaborative and supportive leadership. Some school leaders were perceived as more authoritarian, emphasizing strict rules and performance metrics, while others adopted a more participatory approach, fostering open communication and shared decision-making.

- **Objective 2: Assessment of Mental Health Status**

The study also aimed to assess the mental health status and well-being of teachers at BUBA. Through the interviews, it became evident that teacher mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. While some teachers reported a positive mental health status characterized by job satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment, others expressed concerns related to stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. Factors contributing to positive mental health included a supportive work environment, recognition of teachers' efforts, and opportunities for professional growth.

- **Objective 3: Correlations Between Leadership Styles and Mental Health Outcomes**

The research findings revealed significant correlations between specific leadership styles and the mental health outcomes of teachers. Teachers who reported positive mental health often cited school leaders who embraced collaborative and supportive leadership styles. These leaders were seen as approachable, empathetic, and responsive to teachers' needs, creating an environment conducive to well-being. In contrast, teachers who experienced high levels of stress and burnout often mentioned leaders who adopted more authoritarian and directive styles, contributing to feelings of pressure and job dissatisfaction.

- **Objective 4: Factors Impacting Teacher Well-being**

The study identified several factors within leadership styles that either contributed to teacher well-being or posed challenges to mental health. Supportive leaders who encouraged professional development, provided mentorship, and acknowledged teachers' contributions were associated with enhanced well-being. Conversely, leaders who imposed excessive workload demands, lacked transparency in decision-making, or failed to address teacher concerns had a detrimental impact on mental health.

- **Objective 5: Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Approach**

Based on the research findings, recommendations and insights were developed to enhance the leadership approach within BUBA and promote the mental health and overall well-being of its teaching staff. It is suggested that school leaders undergo leadership training to develop and refine collaborative and supportive leadership skills. Additionally, establishing regular channels of communication between teachers and leaders, along with providing resources for stress management and well-being support, can contribute to a healthier work environment.

V. Discussion

This discussion will delve deeper into the implications of these findings, their alignment with existing literature, and the significance of these insights for both academia and the educational leadership field.

Leadership Styles at BUBA

This variation in leadership approaches mirrors the complexity of leadership in educational institutions. Some leaders at BUBA were characterized by their authoritative and directive styles, emphasizing adherence to strict rules and performance metrics. In contrast, others adopted more collaborative and supportive leadership, encouraging open communication and shared decision-making. These findings resonate with previous research that has identified different leadership typologies in educational settings (Bush, 2011).

Impact on Teacher Mental Health

One of the pivotal findings of this study was the discernible impact of leadership styles on the mental health outcomes of teachers. Teachers who reported positive mental health often attributed their well-being to school leaders who embraced collaborative and supportive leadership styles. These leaders were perceived as approachable, empathetic, and responsive to teachers' needs, fostering a work environment conducive to well-being. Conversely, teachers who experienced stress and burnout frequently mentioned leaders who employed more authoritarian and directive styles, contributing to feelings of pressure and job dissatisfaction. These findings are consistent with existing literature emphasizing the role of leadership in shaping teacher well-being (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

Factors Contributing to Well-being and Challenges

The study also identified specific factors within leadership styles that influenced teacher well-being. Supportive leaders who encouraged professional development, provided mentorship, and recognized teachers' contributions were associated with enhanced well-being. These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of leadership practices such as professional development opportunities and recognition in fostering teacher satisfaction and commitment (Hakanen et al., 2006). Conversely, leaders who imposed excessive workload demands, lacked transparency in decision-making, or failed to address teacher concerns had a detrimental impact on teacher mental health. These challenges mirror the well-documented consequences of excessive workload and lack of support in educational settings (Kyriacou, 2001).

VI. Recommendations and Implications

The research findings hold significant implications for educational leadership practices at BUBA and beyond. It is clear that leadership development and training programs for school leaders are crucial. Such programs should emphasize the cultivation of collaborative and supportive leadership skills, as these styles are closely associated with positive teacher mental health outcomes. Additionally, fostering transparent communication channels between teachers and leaders can enhance trust and facilitate the resolution of issues, contributing to a healthier work environment.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing teachers' well-being as an integral part of effective leadership in educational institutions. Strategies for reducing workload pressures, promoting work-life balance, and providing resources for stress management should be integrated into leadership practices.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the interplay between leadership styles and teacher well-being. The findings underscore the pivotal role of leadership in shaping the mental health of teachers and offer practical recommendations for enhancing leadership approaches within educational institutions. As educational leaders continue to navigate the challenges of fostering positive learning environments, this study highlights the importance of a supportive and collaborative leadership style that prioritizes teacher well-being.

VII. Conclusion

This study delves into the intricate relationship between leadership styles among school leaders at Beijing University for Business Administration (BUBA) and the mental health of its teaching staff. The findings reveal a diverse spectrum of leadership styles at BUBA, ranging from authoritative to collaborative and supportive approaches, reflecting the complexity of leadership within educational institutions. Importantly, these leadership styles have a discernible impact on teacher mental health. Teachers who reported positive mental health attributed it to leaders who embraced collaborative and supportive styles, fostering a conducive well-being-oriented environment. Conversely, those experiencing stress and burnout often cited leaders with authoritarian and directive styles, leading to feelings of pressure and job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, specific factors within leadership styles emerged as contributors to teacher well-being or mental health challenges. Supportive leaders who encouraged professional development and recognized teachers' contributions were linked to enhanced well-being. Conversely, leaders imposing excessive workloads, lacking transparency, or neglecting teacher concerns had detrimental effects on mental health. These findings underscore the crucial role of leadership practices in fostering teacher satisfaction, commitment, and overall well-being within university settings.

In conclusion, this study offers vital recommendations for improving leadership approaches within educational institutions like BUBA. To promote positive learning environments, leadership development programs should emphasize the cultivation of collaborative and supportive leadership skills, enhancing the overall work environment. Transparent communication channels between teachers and leaders should be established to foster trust and facilitate issue resolution. Moreover, recognizing and addressing teachers' well-being as an integral part of effective leadership is crucial. Implementing strategies to reduce workload pressures, promote work-life balance, and provide resources for stress management should be integrated into leadership practices. As the field of educational leadership evolves, it is essential for leaders to acknowledge their significant influence in creating environments where teachers can thrive both personally and professionally.

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