THE EXTENT TO WHICH LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF PRINCIPALS DIFFER IN SCHOOLS AT RISK FOR RECONSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to test a theoretical causal model concerning how elementary and secondary school principals can influence school student achievement through the frequency of implementation of certain instructional leadership behaviors. After controlling for contextual variables, we hypothesized that three latent variables related to principal instructional leadership (school governance, instructional organization, school climate) affected student achievement. A total of 332 teachers and 56 school principals participated in the study. We conducted separate analyses of the proposed model at the individual and school level. The results confirm that the proposed model fit the data. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the results.

INTRODUCTION

This researcher investigated the relationship between patterns of principal leadership orientations as judged by principals, school improvement team members (teachers, parents, and community representatives), and principals' supervisors. A conceptual framework based on the four frames of leadership (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) developed by Bolman and Deal (1991) was used as the basis for identifying the leadership orientations of principals. This chapter presents the findings regarding the principals' frame utilization.

Principals, school improvement team members (teachers, parents, and community representatives), and principals' supervisors completed the Bolman and Deal Leadership Orientations Survey to elicit

information about their own judgments of leadership orientations. This framework has been used for classifying and analyzing behaviors and styles that leaders use to manage organizations (Bolman & Deal, 1991). The survey was designed to categorize responses according to Bolman and Deal's (1991) four styles of leadership. Survey responses from principals provided insights relative to how they view their own behaviors. Additionally, survey responses from SIT Team members and principals' supervisors provided insights about how they viewed the behaviors of their respective principals.

Statistical Analysis

The first statistical analysis the researcher did was to establish the reliability of the Bolman and Deal survey. Gliner and Morgan (2000) state "if each item on a test has multiple choices, such as a Likert scale,then Cronbach alpha is the method of choice to determine the inter-item reliability" (p. 316). Cronbach alphas were computed for each of the four frames. The Cronbach alpha for the first leadership frame, structural, was .92; for human resource, it was .90; for political, the Cronbach alpha was .75; and for symbolic, it was .93. All of these Cronbach alphas were statistically significant at the .001 level and indicated that the instrument has high inter-item reliability for the items comprising each frame. The researcher compared these Cronbach alphas with those computed by Bolman and Deal. They were very similar: structural frame, .92; human resource, .93; political, .91; and symbolic, .93.

These data indicate that if a person took the same survey a second time, the responses would be very similar to the responses given the first time.

Next, the researcher computed correlation coefficients among the four frames of leadership for the total group, and for principals, SIT Team members and principals' supervisors of schools labeled both "at risk" and "making adequate progress." The correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of association between two variables. It reflects how closely scores on two variables go together (Shavelson, 1988, p. 139). These correlation coefficients are displayed in Tables 1 through 10. In interpreting these tables, the researcher used an established set of criteria to make judgments about the significance of the correlations. First, a level of <.05 was used to identify statistically significant correlations. Second, the correlations themselves were judged in the following manner. If the correlation was between 0.0 and 0.30, it was judged to be weak. If it was between 0.31 and 0.70, it was considered modest. If it was above 0.71, it was judged to be strong (Gliner & Morgan, 2000).

The inter-scale correlations presented in Table 1 show that for the total group of schools making adequate progress, there was a strong linear relationship among the four frames of the Bolman and Deal instrument: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. These four frames have a commonunderlying factor concerned with school leadership. All six of the correlations were above .72 and were statistically significant beyond the .001 level, indicating a strong association among them. This means, for

instance, that if a respondent chose option 4 (often) for judging structural there was a strong linear relationship, as Table 1 indicates did exist.

Table 1 Inter-Scale Correlations for the Total Group in the Schools Making Adequate Progress

Structural Leadership Orientation	STRUCTLO	.75	1.00	<.01	<.001
Human Resource Leadership Orientation	HUMRESLO	.82	1.00	<.01	<.001
Political Leadership Orientation	P=.001***	.81	< .05	<.01	<.001
Symbolic Leadership Orientation	SYMBLO	.93	1.00	<.01	<.001

Table 2 presents the correlations for the principals of the schools making adequate progress. The reader is advised to use caution in drawing any conclusions from this table, since it is based on responses from only four principals. In general, correlations should be based on 30 or more respondents. These results indicate that three of the correlations were statistically significant: structural and political, structural and symbolic, and political and symbolic. This finding shows high agreement among these principals on the frequency with which they use the frames. The other three were not statistically significant; interestingly, they were negative, indicating no agreement among the principals in terms of frequency of use.

Table 2 presents the correlations for the principals of the schools making adequate progress

Structural Leadership Orientation	STRUCTLO	.75	.99	<.01	<.001
Human Resource Leadership Orientation	HUMRESLO	.82	.87	<.01	<.001
Political Leadership Orientation	P=.001***	.81	< .05	<.01	<.001
Symbolic Leadership Orientation	SYMBLO	.93	.88	<.01	<.001

For teacher members of the SIT team in schools making adequate progress, all six of the correlations were statistically significant at beyond the .01 level. These correlations are displayed in Table 3. For the parents and community representatives at these schools, all of the correlations were strong and statistically significant. The correlation coefficients presented in Tables 3 and 4, for teachers, parents, and community representatives, indicate that there was a strong linear relationship among the four frames as measured by the Bolman and Deal survey. All of the correlations shown in The data on correlation coefficients indicate that for teachers, parents, and community representatives, there was a strong linear relationship in the frequency of use of the different frames of the Bolman and Deal instrument. For

principals and supervisors, the data are less clear, primarily because of the small number of respondents. The researcher next did an analysis of variance to look for differences among the means of the four frames of Bolman and Deal (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) across the four groups of respondents (principals, teachers, parents and community representatives, and principals' supervisors). Analysis of variance is the appropriate statistic to use when an independent variable has more than two levels (in this case, groups). Tables 11 and 12 present the results of the analysis of variance to determine whether there were statistically significant differences among the four frames used by the principals of the schools making adequate progress and the schools considered at risk, as judged by the principals,teachers, parents and community representatives, and principals' supervisors. The data indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in patterns among the judgments of principals, SIT Team members, and principals' supervisors. Since the analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the means for either the at-risk schools or the schools making adequate progress,the researcher decided to use a finer-grained analysis and therefore conducted a series of independent t- tests.

The researcher used independent t-tests to answer the research questions. The purpose of the t-test for independent means (schools making adequate progress and schools at risk) is to help the researcher decide whether the observed difference between two sample means arose by chance or represents a true difference between populations (Shavelson, 1988).

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