

Teachers' attitude toward performance of high schools' principals in terms of safe school indicators in Eslam Shahr city

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate teachers' attitude on performance of principals of boys high-schools in terms of safe school indicators in Eslam Shahr city. This was a descriptive survey study. The population consisted of all high-school teachers in Eslam shahr ($N = 434$). In order to select a sample from related population, Cochran formula and simple random sampling were administered and 201 participants were selected as sample. A researcher-made questionnaire based on safe school indicators was used for collecting the necessary data. Its validity of tool was confirmed by experts in the field of safe school. Then the draft sample of questionnaire was conducted on 30 participants, the collected data were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha formula and questionnaire reliability was determined to be 0.87. After conducting the final form of questionnaire, the collected data were analysed at two descriptive (median, mean, mode, standard deviation and skewness) and inferential (one-sample T -test) levels. The findings showed that at $\alpha = 0.05$ level, from the perspective of teachers, the performance of principals is above average mean in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr.

Keywords: Performance evaluation, safe school indicators, health, providing information, monitoring, control.

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1. Introduction

The education sector is fundamental to the development of a country. Every year, a large amount of government funds are spent by this sector (Samii-Zafargandi, 2011). One of the major functions is human resource empowerment, especially by conducting pre-service and in-service training courses, because human resource training may have the greatest efficiency and impacts on the educational system. In other words, for establishing and maintaining the effectiveness of educational system, conducting training courses for human resources is essential (Danaeefard, Azar & Salehi, 2010) and, consequently, it will help promotion of the total quality of the educational system through which the improvement of school performance and its members (including staff, students and parents) will be feasible. Thus, preparing training course on the bases of educational system stakeholder needs (especially principals) is compulsory (Eiseri & Yazdkhasti, 2010).

It seems that the familiarity and empowering of school principals with their responsibilities, duties and authorities are the necessary conditions for their success. However, the school is like a bridge which connects students to the broader community. Therefore, it should be the safest place for students because they spend at least 5 hours a day there. Thus, the principal should be competent for creating discipline and a safe society. They should be aware of the importance of educating students in a safe and healthy environment. As members of a school community, the students need safety and security (Nasiri, 2013; Seabrook 2001). An appropriate atmosphere in the school improves students' learning and achievement, improves and empowers employees, teachers and students' morale, increases security inside the school environment, leads to proper use of financial and human resources and creates and provides learning and development environment. Bearing all these in mind, the school principals play an important role in realising and implementing the safe school factors. According to the above, the main question is: What is the attitude of teachers about boys high-school principals' performance in terms of safe school indicators in Eslam Shahr city?

2. Literature Review

In Iran, many studies have been conducted about safe school. Nasiri (2013) conducted a study entitled 'Model of designing safe schools in Shiraz'. The results showed that physical security may help to increase the desirability of learning environment, which will guarantee better learning. Kermani, Farzadkia, Aghai and Bahrami-Asl (2013) conducted a study entitled 'Environmental health and safety of schools in Soltanieh city in 2013'. The findings showed that according to the school environment health regulations and standards, the health and safety of studied schools ranged from moderate to good. However, there were also some problems in health facilities which needed to be improved.

Another study entitled 'The safety of schools in Zarrin Dasht city in 2012' was conducted by Nozari, Shirdarre and Babai (2012). The findings showed that considering the old structure and fabric of schools, there is a need to have more schools in the city. Also, there was a lack of safety engineering supervision in the construction of schools and ignorance of safety equipment such as fire extinguishers and first aid kits. Other researchers, i.e., Javadian Kotnai, Yousefi, Asadpour and Asadpour (2010), investigated 'The safety of primary schools in Mazandaran province and its comparison with standards'. The findings indicated that the safety level of schools in Mazandaran is less than the standard level in some cases (location, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary that the education and training department allocate a special budget to increase safety, reconstruct old schools and build standard schools.

Different studies have also been conducted in other countries. One study entitled 'Security in schools' was conducted by Roberts et al. (2015). The study population consisted of all high-school students in the United States of America. According to the findings, there was aggression and sometimes death due to violence and the lack of security in schools. Also, in his research entitled 'Building the safest schools', Gladden (2005) referred to important features of a safe school: including social capital, more relationship between student and teachers, a sense of respect, empathy between

students and teachers, respond to students' emotions, training school staff to deal with aggressive behaviour, disciplinary policies with mutual respect and respect of school staff to students.

In another study entitled 'Creating a secure environment', Wells (2002) noted 'if a teacher or a member of school feels that he/she is worthless, he/ she will lose his/ her peace and security'. From the perspective of the researcher, the teacher should help students to understand the disciplinary and regulations and facilitate the learning environment. Wells emphasised the improvement of emotional issues such as caring and supervising students, comprehensive learning of students, paying attention to students' individual differences, strengthening the disciplinary regulations and strengthening the positive supportive-social environment for students.

In another study entitled 'Safe schools and health of students', Johnston (2002) considered some important factors for the safety of students: designing a safe school environment, prevention of students from alcohol and drugs by police cooperation and teaching personal and impersonal relationship by considering special content in school curriculum. According to the study findings, the prevention programmes and intervention services should include the settlement of conflicts and disputes. In this regard, the necessary insight should be provided to both teachers and students.

3. Research Methodology

The main objective of this study was investigating the attitude of teachers towards the performance of principals in terms of safe school indicators in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city. This was a survey method of study. The population of this research consisted of all 434 boys high-school teachers in Eslam shahr from which a sample of 201 participants was selected by the Cochran formula. Then simple random sampling was applied in a way that a complete list of boys' high-school was prepared and from that 12 schools were randomly selected. All the teachers of the 12 boys' high-school were included in the sample. A researcher-made questionnaire based on safe school indicators was prepared. The tool studied teachers' attitudes towards boys high-schools' principals' performances in five dimension: prevention, health, physical, providing information, control and monitoring. The reliability of questionnaire was confirmed by safe schools' experts. For determination of tool reliability, the draft form of questionnaire was conducted on 30 participants. Then collected data were extracted and analysed using the Cronbach Alpha formula and its reliability was determined to be 0.87. The final form of questionnaire was conducted on the targeted group, and data were analysed using the SPSS software at two levels: descriptive (median, mean, mode, standard deviation and skewness) and inferential (one-sample *T*-test).

4. Findings

The findings of investigating research hypotheses are as follows.

First hypothesis: From the perspective of teachers, the principals paid enough attention to the health aspect in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Table 1. One sample *t*-test on teachers' attitude towards principals' attention to health aspect

	Mean	Mean differences	Degree of freedom	value t	Significant level
Experimental mean	25.54	3.54	200	9.23	0.0001
Theoretical mean	21				

According to teachers, the obtained mean of principals' attention to health aspect equals 24. The observed *t*-value is 9.23. The critical *t*-value (obtained from Table 1) in 200 degrees of freedom equals 2.58. Thus the observed *t*-value is higher than the critical *t*-value at $P < 0.01$. Thus, according to

teachers, the principals paid enough attention to health aspect and the health standards are implemented in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Second hypothesis: From the perspective of teachers, the principals paid enough attention to the physical aspect in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Table 2. One sample *t*-test on teachers' attitude towards principals' attention to physical aspect

	Mean	Mean differences	Degree of freedom	value <i>t</i>	Significant level
Experimental mean	25.95	1.95	200	5.12	0.0001
Theoretical mean	24				

According to teachers, the obtained mean of principals' attention to physical aspect equals 25.95. The observed *t*-value is 5.12. The critical *t*-value (obtained from Table 2) in 200 degrees of freedom equals 2.58. The observed *t*-value is larger than the critical *t*-value and it is significant at $P < 0.01$. This shows that according to teachers, the principals paid enough attention to physical aspect and the physical standards are implemented in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Third hypothesis: From the perspective of teachers, the principals paid enough attention to providing information aspect in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Table 3. One sample *t*-test on teachers' attitude towards principals' attention to providing information aspect

	Mean	Mean differences	Degree of freedom	value <i>t</i>	Significant level
Experimental mean	24.34	3.34	200	11.72	0.0001
Theoretical mean	21				

According to teachers, the obtained mean of principals' attention to providing information aspect equals 24.34. The observed *t*-value is 11.72. The critical *t*-value (obtained from Table 3) in 200 degrees of freedom equals 2.58. The observed *t*-value is larger than the critical *t*-value and it is significant at $P < 0.01$. Therefore, according to teachers, the principals paid enough attention to providing information aspect and providing information standards is implemented in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Fourth hypothesis: From the perspective of teachers, the principals paid enough attention to prevention aspect in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Table 4. One sample *t*-test on teachers' attitude towards principals' attention to prevention aspect

	Mean	Mean differences	Degree of freedom	value <i>t</i>	Sig. level
Experimental mean	32.15	5.15	200	11.06	0.0006
Theoretical mean	27				

According to the teachers, the obtained mean of principals' attention to prevention aspect equals to 32.15. The observed *t*-value is 11.06. The critical *t*-value (obtained from Table 4) in 200 degrees of freedom equals to 2.58. The observed *t*-value is larger than the critical *t*-value and it is significant at $P < 0.01$. Therefore, according to teachers, the principals paid enough attention to prevention aspect, and its standards are implemented in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Fifth hypothesis: From the perspective of teachers, the principals paid enough attention to supervision aspect in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

Table 5. One sample *t*-test on teachers' attitude towards principals' attention to supervision aspect

	Mean	Mean differences	Degree of freedom	value <i>t</i>	Significant level
Experimental mean	32.65	5.65	200	11.50	0.0001
Theoretical mean	27				

According to the teachers, the obtained mean of principals' attention to supervision aspect equals 32.65. The *t*-value is 11.50. The critical *t*-value (obtained from Table 5) in 200 degrees of freedom equals 2.58. The observed *t* value is larger than the *t*-value in the table and it is significant at $P < 0.01$. Thus, according to the teachers, the principals paid enough attention to supervision aspect, and it is implemented in boys high-schools in Eslam Shahr city.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated teachers' attitudes towards boys schools principals' performance in terms of paying attention to safe school components in Eslam Shahr. The findings showed that from the perspective of teachers, the boys' school principals paid enough attention to health, physical, providing information, prevention and supervision aspects. Accordingly, it can be said that this belief should be considered in schools that all people are valuable and should be treated with respect, students should be treated without insulting, the physical and mental health of students and staff should be particularly considered and necessary planning should be provided for its promotion, the (individual and collective) health of students should be considered and necessary planning should be provided for improving it.

The findings of this study are inconsistent with the findings of Nozari et al. (2012). Also, they are consistent with the findings of Nasiri et al. (2013) and Rabrez et al. (2015). For example, Nasiri (2013) conducted a study entitled 'Model of designing safe schools in Shiraz'. This study investigated the importance, physical security and security environmental variables in educational institutions to achieve a more desirable space. It was concluded that physical security may help to raise the desirability of the learning environment which will guarantee better learning; finally, the safety variables in schools were identified and valued.

However, the school should become a place to promote health and safety. The principals should benefit from all opportunities to connect training programmes to health programmes. Of course, this will be practical through the cooperation of the students, school staff and parents.

6. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, in order to have a safe school and safe school environment, the following suggestions are given.

1. Schools' principals should be enabled to hire more school-based mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists and school social workers), and funds should be allocated specifically for hiring these professionals. Increased access to mental health services and support in schools, including the infusion of social-emotional learning in classrooms, is vital to improving the physical and psychological safety of the students and schools, as well as academic performance and problem-solving skills. Additionally, close collaboration between school counselors and school psychologists and community-employed mental health service providers (e.g., professional counselors, clinical psychologists and clinical social workers) is critical to meeting the range of mental health needs. School psychologists play an integral role in providing direct services to students and teachers, while coordinating with community resources to ensure that all students receive the support they need to be successful.

2. There is a need to ensure that adequate learning supports and policies are present to provide a continuum of services that respond to the needs of all students. This requires treating learning and mental health supports as equally important as, and fully integrated with, school management and instruction. Schools should be required to include measures of school climate and availability of learning in accountability plans. It is critical to enhance school connectedness and trust between students and adults as well as reinforce open communication and the importance of reporting concerns about someone hurting themselves or others.

3. Principals should provide an environment where student relationships could be improved. Prevention is worth a pound of cure. The best way to prevent violence, drugs, bullying and more is to get to know the students and show them that the school staff cares. When students feel invisible, they will go to any limit to get attention — even negative attention. The school principal should watch what happens when a teacher begins to improve his/her student connectedness. When students feel that their teacher knows them and that he/she care about their success, they begin to shine, and other problems simply fade away.

4. School faculty and staff should be trained in how to defuse potentially violent situations, promote parent participation, outline procedures for crises management and practice those procedures regularly.

5. Principals, teachers or other school staff must inspect all exits daily to ensure that stairways, doors and other exits are working properly and are unblocked.

6. Education authorities of districts should develop and regularly update a school safety fact sheet for the district and provide current statistics on incidents of violence and other problems, disciplinary actions and suspensions, attendance and dropouts and vandalism and repair costs. Use this data to inform and educate the public and media.

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