

# Leadership Skills Level of the Public School Principals in Dammam Educational Area

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## Abstract:

The present study aims to reveal the leadership skills level of the public school principals in the Dammam Educational Area. The original population, from which the study sample was derived, consists of all 140 secondary government school principals. A random sample of 112 principals was selected. To reach the goal of the study, the researcher used the descriptive approach and developed the study tool to determine the leadership skills level of the principals from their points of view. The results of the study showed the public school principals' leadership skills level as a whole. Moreover, the results of the study showed that there are statistically significant differences in the level of acquiring leadership skills, which are attributed to "the specialization" variable and are in favor of the pedagogy specialization. The study also showed that there are statistically significant differences for "the service years" variable, which are in favor of the "less than 5 years" category. The study provided some recommendations through which leadership skills of the school principals in the Dammam educational area can be developed.

**Keywords:** Leadership Skills and Dammam Educational Area.

## Introduction:

The development of school administration in line with contemporary administrative trends is an urgent necessity, as the leadership skills topic has received great attention from specialists in the second half of the twentieth century, and Frederic Rudolph (1962) is one of the first ones interested in the study of leadership skills of school principals and educational leaders, indicating that the development of these skills has been and remains a major goal thereof, as it is a necessity to help students keep pace with the challenges and rapid changes in our contemporary world, as well as the development of their level of leadership skills would affect their career after graduation and create career opportunities for them and their ability to shape a future vision and the method to be adopted to invest all available resources to achieve that vision in a way that reflects positively on their lives and society in general.

Given the importance of the school principal role as responsible for the completion of its pedagogical and educational tasks, it is necessary to exercise his/her leadership skills effectively and provide the possibility of his/her continuous professional growth, as he/she is responsible for leading the school staff, encouraging them, and seeking to develop their skills and abilities in a way that leads to the development of their abilities and qualifying them technically and administratively. Karwani & Shalash (2017).

The introduction of leadership skills emerged as a response to criticisms raised against Great Man and Attributes Theories and Behavioral Theory. As the Theory of Great Man and Attributes focused on personality and the behavioral theory focused on a leader's patterns and behaviors at work, the introduction to leadership skills is based on the assumption that a leader's skills determine his/her effectiveness. This introduction is a major shift in leadership thinking due to the

belief that a leader's skills and abilities can be learned and developed through experience and continuous training (Northouse, 2010). Hence, it was an attempt to overcome criticisms raised against previous theories. Rather than focusing on the actions of the leader, the introduction of skills assumes that leadership is a set of abilities that create an effective leader. Although personality attributes play an essential role in leadership, the introduction of skills assumes that a leader's effectiveness depends on the availability of certain abilities of the leader.

On the other hand, the need for leadership has become urgent, and most countries have devoted attention to developing programs aimed at developing the leadership skills of educational institutions employees who have leadership capabilities and providing them with all the cultures that help them to bear the burdens of leadership. Some administrative thinkers affirm that leadership is the essence of the administrative process, its beating heart, and the key to management. Given its importance and great essential role in all aspects of the administrative process, making management more dynamic and effective and acting as a vital tool adopted to achieve its goals. Hence, leadership has become the criterion that determines the success of any organization. Many studies have emphasized that the school principal needs to acquire leadership skills and competencies, such as the study by Hamarasha 2011, the study by El-Rashidi 2018, and the study by Gamb 2015, as the way adopted no longer appropriate to facilitate the administrative work in the school in a manner copes with the rapid development in various fields of knowledge. This requires searching for new advanced methods appropriate for the nature of this era, to keep pace with the rapid development faced the educational institutions in this era when selecting educational leaders, which poses a challenge, in particular when determining the leadership styles, to conduct educational and learning tasks to the fullest extent, as well as considering the manager-centered style or limiting management to specific individuals, and how such new methods would achieve high-performance efficiency. It is not easy to determine the leadership skills of the school

principal because the quality of these skills depends on educational attitudes and varies from one community to another. If this is the case, the mission of developing the school principal is one of the main mandates of the Ministry of Education, and the principal is required to cooperate with teachers, the student, and the local community in conducting studies and research to identify their needs and also the needs of their students.

The interest in studying the topic of leadership skills came from that it is one of the most related variables to the level of teachers' and students' involvement in the educational process and their level of motivation. The higher the level of leadership skills practiced among school principals, the higher the level of productivity and the percentage of achievement in the learning process (Mays, 2016; Wolfe, 2013). This necessarily reflects the quality of the educational outcomes as a whole, and based on the results of the previous studies, it is clear that it is important to pay attention to the development of leadership skills of the school principals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as one of the basic means that enable these educational institutions to build human cadres of high skills and capabilities that qualify it to compete in a rapidly changing environment at all levels in a way that empowers it to achieve excellence in reaching its objectives, which contributes to improving educational outcomes (Mekhlafi, 2017), in addition to being an indicator to predict the quality of the educational process.

### **Research Problem and Questions:**

The education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recently witnessed serious attempts to develop it through the National Transformation Program 2020, which is one of the national programs that aim to achieve the Kingdom's Vision 2030, noting the challenges facing the education system and based on those challenges, set the general objectives of education, the most important of which is to enhance the leadership skills of school principals to meet the requirements of development and the needs of the labor market (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The results of some previous studies indicate that some school principals suffer from some weaknesses in their administrative abilities, especially the new ones, Shahni, (2011), Al-Omari, (2014), Boudiaf, ( 2014), and Shatnawi, (2015 ) who join the administrative work in schools due to the retirement of some principals, or their dismissal from the school administrations as a result of their annual performance, and their periodic movements. Moreover, the researcher observed that there is a variation in the school principals' utilization of some leadership skills in the pedagogical field on the one hand, and upgrading the educational and administrative process towards the new styles and methods on the other hand, so this study is intended to state the leadership skills level of the public school principals and create an effective educational environment in the school, The current study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1- What is the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area from their points of view?
- 2- Are there statistically significant differences between the averages of the study sample estimates of the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area attributed to the variables of the study (specialization, years of service)?

### **Research Objectives:**

- 1- To identify the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area from their points of view.
- 2- To reveal statistically significant differences between the responses of the study sample on the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area from their points of view attributed to variables (specialization, years of service).

### **Importance of Study:**

- The results of the study may help the supervisors and principals of the Dammam Educational Area schools to take more effective actions and decisions to develop the skills of

teachers and students, which is one of the main objectives of the National Transformation Program 2020 in Education.

- The results of the study may support the officials of the Education Department to determine the variables affecting the leadership skills level of the public school principals, and to determine their training needs.

### **Limits of the Study:**

**Objective Limits:** The study was limited to revealing the leadership skills level of the public school principals (administrative skills, technical skills, human skills) in Dammam Educational Area from their points of view.

**Human Limits:** This study was applied to the principals of public schools in the Dammam Educational Area.

**Spatial Limits:** The application of the study performance was limited to Dammam Educational Area in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.

**Time Limits:** This study was applied during the academic year 2021/2022.

### **Study Terms:**

**Leadership Skills:** A set of basic skills required for the success of administrative work in varying degrees, such as interpersonal skills, mental abilities, and human, cognitive, and technical skills.

**The Concept of Procedural Leadership Skills:** It is a set of basic abilities required to enable secondary school principals to accomplish the tasks assigned to them efficiently and effectively, which are administrative skills, technical skills, and human skills, through the answers of the study sample individuals on the scale prepared therefor.

### **Previous Studies:**

The following are some of the previous Arab and

foreign studies related to the research topic listed below in chronological order from the newest to the oldest:

Harahsheh's study (2020) aimed to identify the degree to which the principals of Ministry of Education schools in Mafraq Kasbah Brigade practice leadership skills from the perspectives of teachers in light of the variables of gender, educational qualification, and years of experience. The descriptive approach was used through the development of a questionnaire consisting of a paragraph. The study was applied to a sample of (615) male and female teachers working in the schools of education of Mafraq Kasbah Brigade district. The results showed that the degree to which the principals of Ministry of Education schools in Mafraq Kasbah Brigade practice leadership skills from the perspectives of teachers was medium. The study concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in the estimates of the study sample on the areas of the degree to which the principals of Ministry of Education schools in Mafraq Kasbah Brigade practice leadership skills from the perspectives of teachers attributed to "the gender" variable. The study also found that there are statistically significant differences in the estimates of the study sample on the areas of the degree to which the principals of Ministry of Education schools in Mafraq Kasbah Brigade practice leadership skills from the perspectives of teachers attributed to "the educational qualification" variable and the differences are in favor of graduate studies.

In Al-Asmari's study (2020), which aimed to identify the role of leaders of public schools in the city of Dammam in developing the leadership skills of their deputies from their points of view, and to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher used the descriptive analytical approach. The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect study data, and the study revealed a set of results, most notably: The degree to which the public schools' leaders in the city of Dammam practice their role to develop the leadership skills of their deputies was generally high with a mean of (4.16). The results also showed that there are statistically significant differences at the level of (0.05) between the averages of the study individuals' responses on the role of public

school leaders in developing the management skills of their deputies in the city of Dammam according to the difference of "years of experience" variable, in favor of deputies whose experience is (10) years or more. The results also showed that there are statistically significant differences at the level of (0.05) between the averages of the study individuals' responses on the overall degree of the role of public school leaders in developing the leadership skills of their deputies and its sub-dimensions according to the difference of "the educational qualification" variable, in favor of deputies who obtained bachelor's degree.

In Al-Saadi's study (2019), aimed to reveal the differences in the level of creative thinking of school principals in Irbid Kasbah Brigade according to "the study" variable of principal gender, and the correlation between the level of creative thinking and leadership skills of school principals in the Irbid Kasbah Brigade. The study sample consisted of (216 ) female and male principals of schools in Irbid Kasbah Brigade, and the study used the correlational descriptive approach. The researcher used the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking and a leadership skills scale. The results of the study indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of creative thinking in general among the principals of the Irbid Kasbah Brigade schools, depending on a study variable, which is the gender of the principal. She also pointed out that there is a positive correlation between the level of creative thinking as a whole and each skill on the leadership skills scale. The correlation between flexibility skill and personal skills was the highest, and the lowest correlation was between originality skill and mental skills.

The study of Karwani, Khaled, Shalash, and Bassem (2017), aimed to identify the leadership skills availability level among the secondary school principals in Salfit Governorate, Palestine, from the points of view of teachers and principals themselves, as well as to reveal whether there are differences in the respondents' responses attributed to variables (workplace, years of service, and age). The study sample consisted of (100 ) male and female teachers. Both researchers prepared two questionnaires: The

first one is for principals and the other one is for teachers. To examine the hypotheses of the study, the researchers used the descriptive approach and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study showed that the leadership skills availability level among the secondary school principals in Salfit Governorate was very high on all aspects from the points of view of the principals themselves, and of a low degree from the point of view of female and male teachers, except for the aspect of obstacles, which was medium. The study also did not show any statistically significant differences in the responses of female and male teachers and principals themselves attributed to variables (workplace, years of service, age).

Petroff (2015) conducted a study about the impact of leadership skills on student effectiveness and whether this impact varies according to the nature of the university (public-private) using Dinesen's tool to measure leadership skills among a sample of 7.570 students. The study indicated a statistically significant relationship between skills and student effectiveness, and this association varied according to the type of university (public-private). Moreover, the study emphasized the role of leadership skills in increasing student effectiveness.

The study by Michael and Gambo, 2015, aimed to identify the effective leadership skills of secondary school principals in the state of Plateau in Nigeria and adopted the descriptive survey approach. The questionnaire was used as a study tool applied to a random sample of (32) female principals and (18) male principals from the Jos North schools in the state of Plateau. The study found that school principals lack leadership skills, which was the reason for the poor academic performance of the student. The researchers attributed the reason for the weakness of the leadership skills of the school principals to problems related to funding and equipment, low morale of teachers, poor supervision of schools, and frequent changes in educational policies. The study shows the extent to which school principals need to possess leadership skills and follow effective patterns, such as participative leadership, administrative creativity, decision-

making, community communication skills, computer applications in school administration, and human relations skills.

The study of Piaw et al. (2014) aimed to identify the factors of leadership skills of secondary school principals. It also aimed to identify the leadership skills level of school principals using the questionnaire as a study tool and the descriptive approach. The study conducted in Malaysian secondary schools, and by analyzing the collected data, showed the impact of the factors of experience years and scientific qualification on the respondents' responses on the degree of leadership skills availability, and that the factors affected with (9.24) % of the overall leadership skills. The study did not show differences in the respondents' responses due to gender variables. The study also showed that principals possess high educational and cultural skills and a low level of pedagogical administrative skills and leadership skills in organizational management.

The study (Chuan Yan Piaw, Tie Fatt Hee 2013) aimed to identify the leadership skills of Malaysian secondary school principals to clarify their levels, and proved that there is a positive relationship between the availability of leadership skills, and the experience and professional competence of the principal, and the study also revealed that the principals at the levels of guidance and cultural leadership, but they did not have the same qualification in the leadership skills of management and administrative regulation, while that study confirmed that these principals must have opportunities for professional and administrative development to develop their leadership skills, and the study also concluded that many leadership skills should be available for school principals such as pedagogical leadership, cultural leadership, strategic leadership, organizational management leadership, and pedagogical management leadership.

Hamarasha's study (2011) also aimed to identify the relationship between the leadership practices of school principals as seen by teachers, and the level of their achievement motivation, as the study population consisted of 4024 female and male teachers. They were represented by a

random sample of 118 teachers in Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate, Palestine. The study followed the descriptive approach using the questionnaire to collect data. The results showed that the level of achievement motivation is high with a mean of (83.3). It has a statistically positive and significant correlation with the leadership practices of principals, represented in human relations, communication, and decision-making. The study showed that there are statistically significant differences attributed to "the supervisory body" variable in favor of private entities, while the results did not show statistical significance differences attributed to experience.

The previous proposal, and a review of previous studies, indicate the importance of the topic of leadership skills and the interest of researchers in addressing variable of the study of "leadership skills" and its various dimensions in Arab and international educational institutions, and that the development of leadership skills will be of great importance in keeping up with the challenges and rapid changes in our contemporary world in a way that reflects positively the organizational and administrative environment to achieve the objectives of the school.

### **Research Methodology:**

The researcher followed the descriptive approach to suit the nature of the study, using a tool to collect data from the study sample individuals.

### **Study Population and Sample:**

The study population, from which the study sample was derived, consisted of all public schools principals of various stages in Dammam Educational Area, which are (140) principals during the academic year 2021/2022, and a sample of (112) principals was selected in a simple random way according to the guiding table created by Kerrjcie & Morgan (Al-Khalili, 2012).

### **Study Tools:**

The questionnaire was used as a tool for the current field study to answer the questions of the study and achieve its objectives. In the design of the questionnaire, the researcher depended on reviewing the literature and previous studies related to the topic of the study, and to benefit from the opinions of the referees thereon. The questionnaire consisted of (38) paragraphs to measure the leadership skills of female students distributed on three main aspects, namely administrative skills, technical skills, and human skills. The researcher used in its building the model of Mumford et.al (2007) for leadership skills. A four-pronged scale was adopted (always - often - sometimes -rare).

### **Validity and Reliability of the Tool:**

To ensure the face validity of the tool, the questionnaire was presented in its initial form to 11 referees of education professors from among the faculty members to express their views on the appropriateness of the questionnaire dimensions and the clarity of the statements and their correlation with each dimension. After collecting the opinions of the referees, the researcher made the amendments proposed by the referees by deleting and adding some phrases. Moreover, the validity of the internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient to measure the relationship between the score of each statement and the total score of the aspect to which the statement belongs. Correlation coefficient values ranged between (0.74- 0.85), reflecting the validity of the internal consistency between the questionnaire statements. The relative importance of each item (indicator) was interpreted using the Likert scale explaining the arithmetic mean as shown in the following table:

**Table (1): Likert scale to interpret the arithmetic mean of the response score**

Arithmetic Mean		Result	Score
From	To		
1	1.75	1	Never
1.76	2.50	2	Rare
2.51	3.25	3	Often
3.26	4	4	Always

**Reliability of Research Tool:**

The reliability of the tool is intended to ensure that the answer will be relatively standard if it is repeatedly applied to the same individuals at different times (Alassaf, 2012, p. 430), and the researcher measured the reliability of the research

tool using the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) and the Table No. (2) shows the reliability coefficient of the research tool, as follows:

**Table No. (2): "Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for measuring the reliability of the research tool"**

S. No.	Aspect	Number of the Statements	Reliability Coefficient
1	Development of the Administrative Skills	11	0.860
2	Development of the Technical Skills	14	0.855
3	Development of the Human Skills	13	0.840
Total Reliability of the Tool		38	0.851

It is clear from Table (2) that the questionnaire has a statistically acceptable reliability, as the value of the total reliability coefficient (alpha) reached (0.851), which is a score of high stability, and the reliability coefficients for dimensions ranged between (0.840, 0.860), all of which are good reliability coefficients that can be trusted in the application of the current research tool.

**The Study Findings and Interpretation thereof:**

**Answer to the first question, which states:** "What is the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area from their points of view?"

To study the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area, the arithmetic means of sample individual responses on leadership skills level as a whole are extracted. As in Table (3).

**Table (3): the arithmetic means of ample individual responses on leadership skills level (as a whole)**

Skills	Number of the Statements	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Ranking
Management Skills	11	4.21	0.89	1
Technical Skills	14	4.05	0.88	3
Human Skills	13	4.19	0.83	2
Leadership Skills as a Whole	38	4.15	0.866	

It is clear from the previous table that the level of leadership skills practice as a whole is high, as the total arithmetic mean reached (**4.15**) with a standard deviation (**0.866**) This can be attributed to the efforts made by the Department of Education in Dammam to provide high-quality knowledge and educational services and develop the skills of its managers, as it has become one of the most important strategic objectives that the Department of Education seeks to achieve. The level of administrative skills achievement is ranked first with a mean of 4.21, while human skills ranked second with a mean of 4.19. Technical skills ranked last with a mean of 4.05 and a standard deviation (0.88). This result is consistent with the findings of the study (Posner, 2014), the study of Al-Asmari (2020), and the study of Harahsheh (2020). The researcher can refer this to as the ability of females to express, interact, communicate linguistically, and interact socially in a positive manner with others, while

the result of the study differed from the study of Karwani 2017.

**Answer to the second question:** Are there statistically significant differences between the averages of the study sample estimates of the leadership skills level of the public school principals in Dammam Educational Area attributed to the variables of the study (specialization, years of service)?

#### Validity Test for the first hypothesis:

- There is no statistically significant difference between the responses of the research sample on the level of leadership skills possession attributed to specialization (pedagogical– non-pedagogical). The T-test was used for the significance of the difference between the means of the two groups for the level of leadership skills possession as shown in the following table (4):

**Table (4) A test for the significance of the difference between both means of the research sample for the specialization variable (pedagogical– non-pedagogical)**

Dimension	Specialization	Quantity	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
<b>Management Skills</b>	Pedagogical	60	36.4364	4.74445	1.608	112	.676
	Non-Pedagogical	52	34.9649	4.93517			
<b>Human Skills</b>	Pedagogical	60	48.9455	5.34865	-1.329	112	.596
	Non-	52	50.1930	4.56477			

	Pedagogical						
<b>Technical Skills</b>	Pedagogical	60	47.1667	5.98977	-339	112	.063
	Non-Pedagogical	52	47.5536	5.97546			
<b>Leadership Skills as a Whole</b>	Pedagogical	60	132.2778	13.66087	-160	112	.032
	Non-Pedagogical	52	132.6607	11.36066			

It is clear from the previous table that there are no differences in the level of leadership skills in general and technical skills in particular attributed to the variable of specialization, and thus the null hypothesis, which states that there are no differences between the responses of the research sample on the level of leadership skills, is accepted. This may be attributed to the fact that the educational environment and the organizational climate are similar for the study sample, which was reflected in the lack of differences in the level of leadership skills practice. The administrative services and resources provided by the Department of Education are the same for all school principals because all of them have the same opportunity. The results showed that there are differences in the level of possession of administrative skills in favor of the pedagogical group. This may be

because the nature of pedagogical principals of the schools is widely aware of the methods of leadership and management under their scientific study and knowledge to achieve their desired goals.

#### Validity Test for the second hypothesis:

- There is no statistically significant difference between the responses of the research sample on the level of leadership skills possession attributed to years of service (less than 5 years – 5 years and more). The T-test was used for the significance of the difference between the means of the two groups for the level of leadership skills possession as shown in the following table (5):

**Table (5): T test for the significance of the difference between both means of two research groups for years of service variable**

Dimension	Training	Quantity	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Degrees of Freedom	Statistical Significance
<b>Management Skills</b>	Less than 5 years	19	37.0000	3.02076	1.240	112	.040
	5 years or more	93	35.3978	5.15655			
<b>Human Skills</b>	Less than 5 years	19	53.0000	3.53553	3.182	112	.065
	5 years or more	93	48.9462	5.02032			

<b>Technical Skills</b>	Less than 5 years	19	48.6471	6.24441	1.029	112	.399
	5 years or more	93	47.0220	5.92917			
<b>Leadership Skills as a Whole</b>	Less than 5 years	19	138.6471	8.50692	2.303	112	.148
	5 years or more	93	131.1538				

Table (4) shows that there are differences in the level of leadership skills attributed to the variable of years of service in favor of school principals from a category of “less than 5 years” in the field of leadership skills. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, which states that there are no differences between the responses of the research sample about the level of ownership of leadership skills attributed to the years of service variable. This can be attributed to the fact that school principals from this category are motivated to accomplish the required administrative and technical tasks higher than others and have skills that enable them to achieve their goals and develop their behavioral horizons at the desired level. School principals have many skills, but there may be no opportunity to improve the level of those skills in various fields. They may receive guidance from the Education Department to provide them with tools to improve those skills.

#### Recommendations:

- Developing administrative and human leadership skills for public school principals through advanced training programs that include modern leadership and management methods and evaluation methods that improve the degree of leadership skills practice.
- Holding meetings between school principals, experts, and experienced individuals, through which different leadership experiences are exchanged.
- Conduct other similar studies in the private school's context.

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