Schools' Leadership and Employees' Work-engagement: Evidences from Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The study explored relationship between leadership styles of school heads as perceived by secondary school teachers with teachers' work engagement. Leadership styles of school heads had been explored using The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, The MLQ (FORM5X) in terms of transformational, transactional and avoidant leadership whereas teachers' work engagement had been explored by administering UWES-17. The universe of the study were school teachers comprising sample of 272 using convenience sampling technique. Data had been collected from 30 schools, 19 from urban and 11 from rural places where number of respondents from each school did not exceed than 10. Results of descriptive statistics reveal that out of 30 heads being rated by teachers, approximately 10% were found as transformational, within transactional leaders, 87% utilize Contingent Reward Management, 80% use Management by Exception- Active and 34% leaders exploit Management by Exception- Passive whereas 55 % of them were avoidant leaders. Results of statistical correlations using PPMC declared that leadership is related to work engagement (r=.233) where transformational leadership positively relates (r= .280) and within transactional leadership, contingent reward management (r= .288) and management by exception-Active (r= .150) positively relates to teachers' work engagement. However, management by exception-Passive (of transactional leadership) (r= -.126) and avoidant leadership (r= -.210) negatively relates to teachers' work engagement. The study confirms that leadership styles are correlated to teachers' work engagement indicating that

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transformational leadership as the most effective form of leadership and also the active side of transactional leadership which is characterized by rewarding the right work, being proactive in accounting for mistakes is linked to increasing work engaged behaviours in teachers. Whereas punitive culture, dealing with mistakes after happenings and avoidant leadership is seen to decrease work engaged behaviours in teachers. Work engagement being positive work behaviour and having lasting positive impact on employees' general well being, must be promoted.

Keywords: Leadership, work-engagement, teachers, secondary schools

Introduction

Since long, human resource has been considered a key resource in organizations. All other resources can best be utilized by improving on human resource. Increasing the efficiency of employees has been a key organizational issue. Effective organizations keep putting efforts to increase the efficiency of employees through different ways and means. Employees, at the other hand also, no matter what profession or level, now need to be more persistent and competent to meet the ends at jobs effectively and efficiently. Persistent work behaviors of employees are a prerequisite of effective performances at job. These persistent work behaviors are seen in work engaged employees (Wijhe, Peeters and Schaufeli, 2011). Engaged workers work for longer hours and strive hard for achieving targets. According to Wijhe et al., (2011) engaged workers are driven by autonomous i.e. intrinsic motivation - SDT). It suggests that engaged workers work because for them, work is interesting, enjoyable and satisfying. Similar findings are observed with in Chinese sample (Van Beek. et al., 2011; Van Beek, Taris & Schaufeli 2011). Work engagement is found to associate with positive consequences. work engaged employees are seen satisfied at work, enjoy good health. Work engagement is seen to be negatively correlated to health hazards (Bakker, 2009) and depict positive attitudes towards job e.g. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and low turnover intention (Gorgievski, Bakker, Schaufeli, 2010). Work engaged employees are considered good and effective from organizational point of view (Burke, 1999) as they give desired output at jobs. However, here the question arises: As engaged workers are considered efficient to meet the ends from organizational perspective, does the leadership reinforce work behaviors in work engaged employees? In organizations, much stands on

leaders' style to lead the human resource. Overall culture of the organizations tells about the leaders' vision to lead the people. Only a talented and motivated leader can persuade and motivate employees to create better work culture and get maximum from employees. On the other side, a leader can even ruin employees' behaviours, develop negativity and frustration and effect employees in a negative way by exercising unnecessary pressures and unhealthy practices.

Literature Review

Literature also guides that management practices and leadership style does throw an impact on employees' nature of doing work at jobs. More specifically, transformational leaders are known to encourage work engagement and commitment in employees (Tims, Bakker & Xanthopoulou (2011) as they are self motivated leaders, so they encourage and transform their employees into self motivated employees. A study by Tims et al. (2011) explored mediating role of followers' optimisim and self efficacy between relationship of transformational leadership and employees' day to day work engagement. Their key finding was evidence gained of positive relationship between day to day transformational leadership and work engagement. Employees' feel more involved, commitment and perform better under transformational leaders (Shamir et al., 1993). A follower who gets support, and guidance from the leader, can find the job more enthusiastic leading to satisfying state of affairs. Thus, high level of enthusiasm and involvement with in job could be related to work engagement (Tims et al., 2011). It can therefore be assumed that transformational leaders can motivate their subordinates to lead them towards achievement of organizational goals effectively. Provided that leadership might provoke work engagement with in followers, work engagement should be encouraged. This is because work engagement is not just good from personal but also organizational point of view (Shimazu, 2010). Current study is an attempt to assess whether and to what degree relationship exists between leadership styles of school heads (i.e. transformational, transactional and avoidant leadership) and teachers' work engagement at secondary school level.

In Pakistan's scenario, teachers are exhaustively involved in multi tasking. School teaching does not mean executing seven to eight hours at job; rather it demands continuous hard work, full commitment and devotion to compete in dynamic nature of school teaching. Teachers are not only supposed to keep themselves abreast with new knowledge,

innovative teaching techniques with good command in communication skills, but also have to face a tough competitive environment along with heavy pressures from the school management team. A teacher is also liable to execute many administrative tasks; many of them as permanent part of the job and still few assigned tasks from time to time. Keeping in view such demands on part of the teacher, a leader of the team might always be keen to inculcate persistent work behaviors in teachers so that teachers be able to confront to heavy loads of pressure at work. Here comes the role of a leader that might motivate and let the teachers enjoy their work. So, in the current study, school heads at secondary level are assessed on their styles of leadership as perceived by teachers and relationship between leadership styles of school heads and self perceived teachers' work engagement. The study has implications in improving upon leadership practices at school level in Pakistan to promote work engaged behaviours in teachers.

Theoretical frame work adopted for assessing leadership styles in Full Range Leadership theory, "FRLT" from Greiman, (2009) which assesses leaders on transformational, transactional and avoidant leadership style with multifactor leadership questionnaire as perceived by teachers. According to the theory, transformational leaders exhibit five characteristics according to which leader is charismatic, confident, ethical, idealistic, and trust worthy (Greiman, 2009). Eyal and Kark (2004) consider transactional leadership as involving an exchange process between the leader and the followers, intended to increase followers' compliance to the leader and the organizational rules. Transactional leadership exhibits three management characteristics (Greiman et al., 2009) which are, contingent reward management in which leader clarifies expectations and positively reinforce followers' efforts by giving rewards to the employees, when the expectations are met. Another one is Management-by-exception-Active (MBE-A) which is strict inspection and monitoring of performances by the leader, taking timely counteractive actions by providing negative reinforcements to make sure that standards are met. Yet another form of transactional leadership is Management-by-exception-Passive (MBE-P) in which leader intervenes and takes actions (e.g. punishments, negative criticism) after failure of meeting standards. Other form of leadership according to Full range leadership theory is avoidant leadership which is a non leadership style that refers to absence of leadership behavior. Judge and Picolo (2004) declare that transformational leadership has a strong positive correlation with contingent reward (.80) and strong negative correlation with laissez-faire (-.65) leadership.

Concept of work engagement is gained importance with respect to employees' output at work. As increased work engagement with in human resource has shown better personal outcomes as well as professional outcomes. As Bakker, Demerouti, Xanthopoulou (2011) acclaim that the main reason for the growing interest of both academics and managers in the concept of work engagement is its predictive value for job performance. Bakker (2009) discusses two schools of thought exist on understanding of the concept. First school of thought assumes that burnout and engagement are opposites of each other where burnout is seen as corrosion of engagement with the job and engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and professional efficacy, which are opposites of the three burnout dimensions. Although, the second school of thought does conceptualize work engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout, however defines engagement in its own right. It is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295). Vigour is a quality of being highly energetic, having capacity to stand firm no matter if confronted by high levels of task difficulty or failures while working. (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Dedication is being strongly involved in work and experiencing a sense of significance and enthusiasm. (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Absorption is being able to maintain high concentration in work. Time quickly passes for him/her and faces trouble getting disconnected from work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Another view on work engagement is trait and state work engagement. So far discussed work engagement is called trait-like work engagement which is between persons design. It addresses why one person feels engaged at work while another does not. However, it cannot explain why engaged employees sometimes give below average or poor performances. State-like work engagement is within-person view and focuses on reasons why one person feels more engaged at work on a particular day and not on other day. These daily changes in work engagement within persons can be causally related to daily changes in performance. (Bakker, 2009; Demerouti and Xanthopoulou, 2011). From a conceptual point of view, work engagement is seen as ''day-level work engagement'' and ''habitual work engagement''. Where, dichotomy trait-state suggests work engagement as a dispositional personality trait, habitual work engagement refers to an affective-cognitive state that is relatively stable across time, however is influenced by work characteristics. So, work engagement can be taken as engagement at job in general, i.e. habitual work engagement, the particular work-day i.e. day-level work engagement, or the task at hand i.e. task engagement (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2011). Work engagement as

positive concept: A lot of organizational and psychological literature supports positive effects of work engagement with in employees. Bakker (2009) declares that engaged employees are highly energetic, self-efficacious individuals who exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Work engagement is also positively related to health, that is, to low levels of depression and distress and psychosomatic complaints. Being a healthy being let engaged workers focus on their tasks and dedicate all their energies in to their work. (Bakker, Demerouti, Xanthopoulou, 2011). Work engagement not only enhances positive attitudes towards work but also towards organization, such as "job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and low turnover intention" (Gorgievski, Bakker, Schaufeli, 2010). Bakker et al. (2011) declare in their one of recent research that engaged workers keep up their own work engagement by proactively shaping their work environment, by making full use of the available job resources and also creating their own resources to stay engaged. Bakker (2009) narrates that work engagement has also predicted increases in next year's job resources, including "social support, autonomy, learning opportunities, and performance feedback" in a study conducted on managers. This all suggests that engaged workers are better option for the organization as they create job and personal resources that advances onwards engagement. As Gmorgievski et al. (2010) verify that studies also show that engaged employees perform better than their less engaged colleagues. They are open to new opportunities, helpful to people and build job and personal resources, such as self-confidence and optimism. Bakker (2009) explains that engaged workers also cultivate work engagement in colleagues. Resultantly, team performance is enhanced. A study on 2,229 officers working in teams found that team-level work engagement relates to individual engagement in team. He also summarizes positive aspect of engaged workers as being joyful and enthusiastic, better health, creating own job and personal resources transmitting work engagement to others. Bakker (2009) mentions that 'engagement' assessed by UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002) includes three components: vigor, dedication and absorption. The UWES has been authenticated in several countries, i.e. China, Finland, Greece, South Africa, Spain and The Netherlands. Confirmatory factor analyses in all researches confirmed the three factor structure of the tool. Also three of the subscales have been found to be internally consistent. Considering authentic proves of validity and reliability from the literature, researcher found the tool well appropriate to be used in the current study.

Rationale and Problem of the Study

Leaders are known to influence employees performances (Glaos, Notelaers, & Skogsad, 2011). Role of leaders in educational institutions is more crucial, where transformational leaders can bring innovations and betterments with in educational enterprise (Eyal and Kark, 2004). Particularly transformational leadership is linked to employees work engagement (Tims et al., 2011). Work engagement in terms of positive work behaviour (Gorgievski, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2010), might be linked to transformational leadership style. Therefore, the study aims to explore relationship of transformational leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement at secondary school level. Keeping in view, the primary position of leaders in organization to influence employees work output and accelerating work engagement- a positive work behaviour in employees, the study intended to investigate three leadership styles as suggested by Full Range leadership theory, i.e., transformational, transactional (i.e. contingent reward management, management by exception-active, management by exception-passive) and avoidant leadership and their relationship with teachers' work engagement at secondary school level in Pakistan. Following objectives have been designed for the study:
1. To explore relationship between leadership styles of school heads and teachers' work engagement
2. To explore relationship between transformational leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement
3. To explore relationship between transactional leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement
4. To explore relationship between avoidant leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement

Following hypotheses have been formulated for the study:
H_1: There is no relationship between leadership style of school heads and teachers' work engagement
H_2: There is no relationship between transformational leadership style of school heads and teachers' work engagement
H_3: There is no relationship between transactional leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement
H_4: There is no relationship between contingent reward management in transactional leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement
H_5: There is no relationship between management by exception-active in transactional leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement

H_6: There is no relationship between management by exception-passive in transactional leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement

H_7: There is no relationship between avoidant leadership of school heads and teachers' work engagement

Significance

The study gives a useful body of knowledge about secondary school heads' leadership styles and teachers' work engagement in Pakistan's context. Research highlighting role of leaders in promoting work engagement in teachers have been scarcely done in Pakistan. The study is practically significant for organizations, specifically, educational institutions to work on improving both on leaders' style of leading teachers and promoting positive work behaviours in teachers. The research is significant in educational institutions, where teachers burn the toils to handle almost everything at job in school teaching. Also, significant empirical evidences of connection of leadership styles of school heads with teachers' work engagement imply that school heads should be given proper training to build positive work behaviours i.e. work engagement in teachers.

Methodology

The study incorporates descriptive and correlation research to investigate relationship between leadership styles (rated by teachers) and teachers' work engagement. It is a cross sectional study that had been conducted in a non-contrived settings where unit of analysis is an individual, i.e. teacher at secondary school level. Target population had been all teachers at Punjab districts, where as accessible population is teachers at Sargodha district from where actual data had been collected. Using convenience sampling (a non probability technique), data had been collected from 272 teachers (N=272 where M=107, F=165). Response rate had been 71.5 %. Questionnaires used for data collection were: The MLQ (FORM 5X) (for assessing leadership style of school heads), and UWES-17 (for assessing teachers' work engagement). According to Greiman (2009), MLQ FORM 5X is extensively used tool to evaluate transformational leadership style. Majority of prevailing research to assess leadership styles in various organizations has been done by utilizing MLQ. First version of MLQ had been developed some 20 years ago. Then the instrument had been revised many a times. Many versions of the MLQ have been utilized in the US and

more than 30 countries. Also translated versions of the tool are available in many languages. Questionnaires had been adapted and translated in urdu language after consultation with experts in the field. Also demographic information had been inquired from the teachers through questionnaire. Responses on questionnaire from 30 teachers were subjected to pilot testing where the tool was further refined. The study is delimited to schools in Sargodha District only. The study is delimited to teaching staff of schools only. The study is a single cross sectional study and data are collected at one point of time.

Results

Below is presented analysis and interpretation of the results of the study. The table below presents the percentages of leadership styles of school heads, teachers' work engagement and percentages of teachers' demographics (gender, school, area) respectively.

Table 1
Percentage of leadership styles and teachers' work engagement (n=272), gender and school

Sr. No.				Percentage %
		Transformational leadership		10.3
1	School heads' leadership styles	Transactional leadership	Contingent Reward management	87
			Management by exception-Active	80
			Management by exception-Passive	35
		Avoidant leadership		55
2		Work engagement		84
3	Teachers' gender	Male		39
		Female		61
4	School	Public		48
		Private		52
5	Area	Rural		37
		Urban		63

Table 1 shows that 10% leaders as perceived by teachers are

transformational leaders. In transactional leadership, 87% leaders as perceived by teachers are committed to contingent reward management, 80% teachers rated heads as committing management by exception-active, 35% school heads as perceived by teachers are committed to management by exception-passive. Avoidant leadership comprised 55% of school heads as perceived by teachers. Percentage of work enagaged teachers came out 84%. Of the total sample of teachers (n=272), 39% were male and 61% were female, 48% teachers were from public and 52% were from private sector where as 37% teachers belonged to rural area and 63% belonged to urban area.

Table 2
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of leadership and teachers' work engagement

Leadership	Work engagement	r^2
.233**	.233**	.054

n = 260 (correct cases)

** $p < .01$

Table 2 shows that there is a positive relationship between leadership and teachers' work engagement. (r=.233).

Table 3
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of transformational leadership and teachers' work engagement

Transformational Leadership	Work engagement	r^2
.280**	.280**	.078

n = 262 (correct cases)

** $p < .01$

Table 3 shows that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' work engagement. (r=.280).

Table 4
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of transactional leadership and teachers' work engagement

Transactional Leadership	Work engagement	r^2
.185**	.185**	.034

n = 268 (correct cases)

** $p < .01$

Table 4 shows that there is a positive relationship between transactional Leadership and teachers' work engagement. (r=.185).

Table 5
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of contingent reward management and teachers' work engagement

Contingent reward management	Work engagement	r^2
.288**	.288**	.082

n = 271 (correct cases)

** $p < .01$

Table 5 shows that there is a positive relationship between Contingent reward management and teachers' work engagement. (r=.288).

Table 6
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of management by exception-active and teachers' work engagement

Management by exception-active	Work engagement	r^2
.150*	.150*	.022

n = 271 (correct cases)

** $p < .05$

Table 6 shows that there is a positive relationship between management by exception-active and teachers' work engagement. (r=.150).

Table 7
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of management by exception-passive and teachers' work engagement

Management by exception-passive	Work engagement	r^2
-.126*	-.126*	-.015

n = 268 (correct cases)

*$p < .05$

Table 7 shows that there is a negative relationship between management by exception-passive and teachers' work engagement. (r= -.126).

Table 8
Pearson Product Moment Correlation of avoidant leadership and teachers' work engagement

Avoidant leadership	Work engagement	r^2
-.210**	-.210**	-.044

n = 271 (correct cases)

**$p < .01$

Table 8 shows that there is a negative relationship between avoidant leadership and teachers' work engagement. (r= -.210).

Discussion

Findings of the study indicate that 10% of the teachers (n=272) rate their leaders as transformational leaders. It implies that percentage of transformational leaders as perceived by teachers is quite less in schools. It has been found that transactional leadership is mostly practiced by school heads, where contingent reward management and management by exception-Active is used by 87% and 80% of school heads respectively, whereas management by exception-Passive is executed by 35% of the school heads as perceived by secondary school teachers. Also 55% of the teachers (n=272) perceive their leaders practicing avoidant or laissez faire leadership style.

Descriptive analysis of teachers' work engagement reveal that 84% teachers (n=272) in schools are engaged workers i.e. they are intrinsically motivated to give good performances at job. They work because for them, work is joy. This positive feeling let them keep

working enthusiastically (Schaufeli, et al. 2009). Results of correlation statistics suggest that there exists a significant positive relationship between school heads' leadership styles and teachers' work engagement (r= .233). Although weak, yet it is significant relationship. Thus, it is concluded that leadership styles of heads at secondary school level and work engagement of school teachers are related to each other and that change in leadership style of school heads does end in change in teachers' work engagement. Also, there has been observed positive relationship between transformational leadership style of school heads and teachers' work engagement (r=.280). This result for correlation is consistent with findings of Tims et al. (2011) who concluded daily transformational leadership style of the leaders to be positively related to daily work engagement. Correlation coefficient between heads' contingent reward management in transactional leadership style of school heads and teachers' work engagement (r=2.88) indicates degree of significant positive relationship between the two variables. Thus, it can be suggested that increase or decrease in contingent reward management might bring an increase or decrease in teachers' work engagement. Relationship between school heads' management by exception-Active in transactional leadership style and teachers' work engagement came as positive (r= .150), which implies that increase in management by exception-Active relates to increase in teachers' work engaged behaviours. Management by exception-Passive of school heads negatively relates to teachers' work engagement (r= -.126).Negative relationship between management by exception-Passive and work engagement implies that increase in management by exception-Passive practices relate to decrease in teachers' work engagement. A leader practicing management by exception-Passive, resists change under his/her head and waits for mistakes to occur to take coercive actions i.e. provides negative feedback after mistakes have occurred. (Greiman, et al. 2009). It is quite rational as engaged workers being a composite of vigour, dedication and absorption; work harder not only by utilizing the given resources, rather creating resources on their own. Their innovativeness and initiative is evident from literature. (Schaufeli et al. 2007). However, if a leader resists or stops opportunities of change, work engaged behaviours of the followers will be suppressed. Negative relationship of management by exception-passive with teachers' work engagement in the current study supports the same theme. Negative impact of management-by-exception passive has also been identified by Rowald and Schlotz (2009) where it was positively related to four

indicators of stress, namely: excessive work and social demands, work dissatisfaction and social recognition, performance pressure, and social conflicts. They further recommended that practice of management-by-exception passive should be avoided, particularly, in public sectors, in order to have healthy workers at the work place (Rowald and Schlotz, 2009). Avoidant leader, uninvolved and least interested to identify any job affairs or followers' good performances, lacking in providing an environment that is conducive for workers to excel, can remain unable to promote positive work behaviours with in employees. Current study provides empirical evidence on the same where avoidant leadership of school heads made negative correlation with teachers' work engagement (r= -.210). Negative relationship between laissez faire leadership and work engagement is significant enough to conclude that teachers' work engagement decreases with the avoidant style of their leaders. The results are in accordance with previous studies that conclude on non-constructive nature of the laissez-faire leadership style. (Tims et al., 2011). In an experimental study, members with avoidant leaders, though exercised control over decision processes yet were found not motivated enough to invest additional effort at work. (Tims et al. 2011). Thus, the findings of the study declare negative relationship between school heads' lassize faire leadership style and teachers' work engagement which also empirically justifies Tims et al. (2011) assumption that avoidant leaders lack motivational power and inspirational appeal so they might not have a positive relationship with teachers' work engagement.

Conclusion

The research study concludes that teachers' work engagement is linked to leadership styles of school heads at secondary level. Transformational leadership and two out of three sub scales of transactional leadership, i.e. contingent reward management and management by exception-active increase teachers' work engagement where as management by exception-Passive- a sub scale of transactional leadership as well as avoidant leadership decrease teachers' work engaged behaviours. The evidences of linkage between leadership styles and teachers' work engagement attained through the research gives important body of knowledge in Pakistani context. A pretty less percentage of transformational leadership (10%) in secondary schools might strike educational leaders as well as the educational enterprise as a whole to rediscover some effective leadership practices to promote work

engagement in teachers. Also the evidence of positive relationship between management by exception-Active (a sub scale of transactional leadership) and teachers' work engagement raises a question whether the school leaders find this coercive leadership style as very effective strategy which is practiced by 80% of school leaders. School leaders should foster positive work behaviours and impede negative work behaviours in teachers by adopting good leadership practices such as by being transformational. The study has also implications at organizational level to train the faculties of educational leaders to transform them into transformational leaders as a research study also shows that leaders can be trained on learning skills and attributes of transformational leadership (Tims et al., 2011).

Recommendations

1. It is recommended for future researchers that further studies may be conducted to explore causal comparisons of leadership styles and work engagement; work engagement of teachers as perceived by school heads in order to avoid common method bias; other work place variables promoting work engagement to identify stronger correlates of the two constructs; significant differences in leaders' leadership styles on the basis of leaders' demographics.
2. Passive leadership and avoidant leadership being non indulgent and ineffective styles of leadership should be minimized at secondary schools as they are found to be negatively associated with teachers' work engagement.
3. Although management by exception-active in transactional leadership increases teachers' work engagement, but being a coercive transactional leadership style, it should be avoided by the leaders.
4. Educational leaders should focus on identifying teachers' work behaviours as teachers burn the toils for achieving excellence at work places. Some might be working hard, just to listen to a single phrase of praise or to avoid getting insulted by the head instead of enjoying their work. This could be done by reducing the distance and keeping good level of communication between head and teachers. Also the school head can develop various channels of communication by seeking information about teachers from other teachers and colleagues at work place.
5. School leaders should adopt good leadership practices such as by

being transformational and executing contingent reward management with in transactional leadership style.

6. Educational leaders should be trained to be effective leaders to promote teachers' positive work behaviours such as work engagement.

7. Further research should explore; work behaviours of teachers as perceived by school heads in order to avoid common method bias; explore stronger work place variables prompting work engagement in teachers; design and test interventions for increasing work engagement in teachers.

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