The Role of the Interpersonal Skills of the School Principals in Optimizing Positive School Climate: A Concept Paper

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ABSTRACT

Fostering a positive school climate is an essential aspect of school improvement. Research has shown that the interpersonal skills of school principals play a crucial role in optimizing school climate. This concept paper aims to develop a conceptual framework that utilizes the current literature on the role of the principal's interpersonal skills in optimizing positive school climate. The literature review focuses on specific interpersonal skills such as communication, trustworthiness, empathy, and problem-solving, which are essential for promoting a positive school climate. The research methodology used in this paper was a comprehensive literature review to develop a conceptual framework on the role of the interpersonal skills of school principals in optimizing a positive school climate. The paper also examined the perspectives of teachers and how their perceptions of the principal's interpersonal skills impact the school climate. Additionally, the paper integrated Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to provide a more holistic view of the school climate and identify how different systems within and outside the school can be influenced to optimize it. This paper contributes to the literature by providing a more in-depth understanding of the specific interpersonal skills that are required for school climate optimization and their influence on the overall learning and work environment.

Keywords: Principal Interpersonal Skills; School Climate Optimization; Soft Skills

1. Background

School climate is a critical aspect of school improvement, as it plays a significant role in shaping the learning and working environments for students and staff. A positive school climate is defined as a safe, respectful, and supportive environment that promotes learning and well-being. Research has shown that the interpersonal skills of school principals play a crucial role in optimizing school climate. The principal's interpersonal skills are crucial for creating a positive and supportive learning environment for students and staff. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific interpersonal skills that are required for school climate optimization and their influence on the overall

learning and working environment. Therefore, the current study aims to develop a conceptual framework that utilizes the current literature on the role of the principal's interpersonal skills in optimizing a positive school climate. The study focused on specific interpersonal skills such as communication, trustworthiness, empathy, and problem-solving, which are essential for promoting a positive school climate. Additionally, the study examined the perspectives of teachers and how their perceptions of the principal's interpersonal skills impact the school climate. This study also integrated Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to provide a more holistic view of the school climate and identify how different systems within and outside the school can be influenced to optimize it. This study contributed to the literature by providing a more in-depth understanding of the specific interpersonal skills that are critical for school principals to foster a positive school climate, as well as filling gaps in the current body of knowledge on this topic. The methodology used enhanced the understanding of the importance of interpersonal skills for school leaders and provided a roadmap for future research in this area.

The role of school principals in fostering a positive school climate is a critical aspect of school improvement. However, the existing literature on the subject is limited in terms of its depth and specificity. The objective of this study is to address this gap in the literature by exploring the interpersonal skills of school principals as perceived by teachers and their impact on optimizing a positive school climate. The overarching aim of this study is to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework that integrates the relevant literature on optimizing school climate with the interpersonal leadership skills of school principals. The research questions for this study will focus on the specific interpersonal skills, such as communication, trustworthiness, empathy, and problem-solving, that are necessary for school climate optimization. This study will contribute to the existing literature by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between the interpersonal skills of school principals and the optimization of a positive school climate.

The end of this school climate is the attention of many people, especially researchers and principals and the attractiveness of the school climate as a data-driven school improvement strategy supports parents, students, and school personnel to learn and work to create safer schools, supportive of even more interesting learning activities. The attractiveness of the school climate lies in the important demands of the school climate: relationship safety, teaching and learning, the institutional environment, and school improvement processes. Fostering a positive school climate is an important aspect of school improvement. This will encourage collaboration between educational institutions and motivate students to work together in a mutualistic symbiosis.

Over the past several decades, school climate and its relation to academic achievement and other educational outcomes have been of growing interest to educators, researchers, and educational policymakers. School climate is an avenue to increase student achievement. Schools with more positive climates have higher academic achievement than schools with lower levels of positive climates. Several authors Dutta & Sahney (2022) reported that school climate is the main component of student learning and is associated with improved academic achievement.

In the context of school climate and learning policy management, principals as leaders have a responsibility to guide the school for better teaching and learning. The five main responsibilities of leaders in creating a good school climate include the involvement of the school principal and school culture which influence the climate of the school. According to this, the principal's responsibilities as a leader include, first, establishing a vision of academic success for all students. A fundamental indicator of school climate is academic achievement (Daily *et al*., 2019). In turn, school climate is a primary component of student learning and academic achievement. Schools with a positive school climate have remarkably higher academic achievement than those with a negative school climate

(Voight & Hanson, 2017). Increases in a positive school climate coincide with improved academic achievement. Teachers have a greater influence on student academic achievement than any other school reform initiative (Opper, 2019). The problem was teachers' and school leaders' perceptions of factors affecting school climate and student achievement.

2. Review of Literature

There has been little research on the impact of principal interpersonal skills on school climate optimization as perceived by teachers (Malone 2013). Furthermore, there is little empirical evidence that the interpersonal skills of an educational leader improve school climate. The current state of knowledge lacks an understanding of the relationship between a principal's interpersonal skills, as perceived by teachers, and the optimization of a positive school climate in secondary schools. This is an important gap to fill, given the increased demands placed on school leaders and administrators to create positive learning environments in light of high-stakes testing and the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Trujillo *et al*., 2017) Justice (2018) conducted a study in a North Carolina County entitled "The Relationship between Administrator Interpersonal Skills and School Climate" to examine the importance of specific interpersonal skills (i.e., trustworthiness, communication, empathy, and problem-solving) possessed by principals, as perceived by teachers, in fostering and maintaining a positive school climate. The results of this research provide valuable insights into the role of interpersonal skills in optimizing school climate.

Malone (2013) conducted a study titled "The relationship of the principal's soft skills to school climate, where he explored the relationship between the interpersonal skills (such as trustworthiness, communication, empathy, and problem-solving) of the principal and the optimization of school climate. Hill (2021) conducted a study in southeast Texas, exploring the correlation between teacher perceptions of a principal's interpersonal skills (namely, communication, empathy, trustworthiness, and problem-solving) and a positive school climate that optimizes student academic achievements.
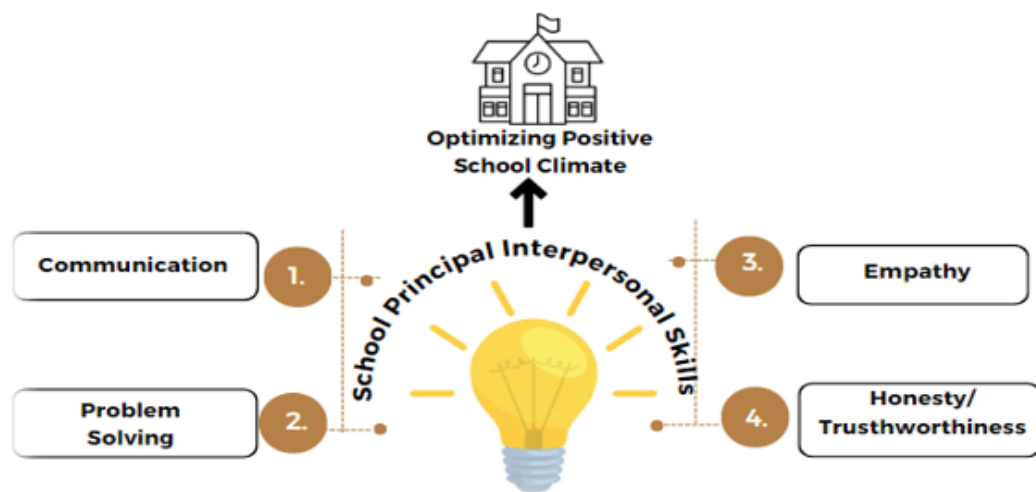

Figure 1: The research problem statement

2.1 Educational Leadership and Institutional Improvement

Shaturaev (2021) Educational leadership is a system that has a goal or rationale, calls for inputs or resources, follows procedures, yields results, and takes place in a particular climate, setting, or context. The practice of persuading others to accomplish objectives for improvement or outcomes in an

educational context is known as educational leadership.

Bush (2019) an acknowledged authority in leadership and management development, maintains that as the global economy gathers pace, more governments are realizing that their main assets are their people and that remaining or becoming competitive depends increasingly on the development of a highly skilled workforce. This requires trained and committed teachers; in turn need the leadership of highly effective principals with the support of their senior and middle managers. Here, the central role of leadership lies in the process of selecting the right people for the right job to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization.

Some critics observe that most of the influence is neutral as it does not explain what goals or actions should be sought through this process. This brought about certain alternative constructs of leadership that focused on the need for leadership to be grounded in firm personal and professional values. In this perspective, Dumulescu & Muţiu (2021) claimed that the primary role of any leader is the unification of people around the key values. Bush's (2019) research in 12 effective schools in England and Wales concluded that good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values that represent their moral purposes for the school. Dolebo (2021) revealed in his study that most school principals place a high value on interpersonal relationships and want everyone to be happy. The study also found that internal (teacher and school leader related) and external (socio-cultural environment and organizational-related) factors influenced school leaders' ability to carry out their responsibilities.

Thus, it proved that there is a significant correlation between principals' instructional leadership and school success. As a result, it will enhance the instructional leadership of school principals. It will further have positive impacts on teachers' curriculum delivery, teaching strategies, academic assessment, professionalism, behaviour, and monitoring and engagement. These factors will contribute to school climate optimization.

2.2 Vision in Leadership

According to Mombourquette (2017), vision is the vital element in effective leadership. Xhomara (2018), drawing on the work of Bennis and Nanus (1985), ten emerging generalizations about leadership, four of which are directly related to vision.

> a) Outstanding leaders have a vision for their organization
> b) The vision must be communicated in a way that secures commitment among members
> of the organization.
> c) Communication of vision requires communication of meaning.
> d) Attention should be given to institutionalizing vision if leadership is to be successful.

These generalizations are still regarded as normative about the centrality of effective leadership. Trujillo *et al*.'s (2021) review of the concept shows that it remains problematic. This argument makes it evident that the articulation of a clear vision has the potential to develop schools. However, empirical evidence of its effectiveness remained mixed. School leaders who can develop specific vision for their school whether private or public, will have an administrative influence on curriculum delivery and school management. Thus, school leaders can develop a specific vision for their school given government and private administrative influence on curriculum delivery and management. There is a strong relationship between the principals' shared vision and the optimization of the school climate. The vision is shared by the principal through his interpersonal skills of communication, empathy, and problem solving with his team to effectively resolve team problems through a shared and inspiring vision.

2.3 **Theoretical Context**

There is currently little research on principal soft skills in relation to school climate from a teacher's perspective in relation with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. According to Wilson (2004), cultivating a positive school environment through a school leadership ethos that values diversity improves student relationships. Incorporating this type of school ethos has an impact on the developing child's ecological systems. Urie Bronfenbrenner, an American psychologist, developed the ecological systems theory to provide a framework for comprehending human development through the interactions and effects of external systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory the conceptual framework guiding this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory intertwined with the school climate model to influence the school principal's interpersonal skills and student academic achievement. Theoretically, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) has served as the framework for many studies on teacher perceptions (Moore 2020) and studies on school climate (Palmer, 2019). However, the theory has not served as the framework for how teachers' perceptions about their principals' soft skills for optimizing of school climate influence academic achievement at schools. Bronfenbrenner saw the process of human development as being shaped by the interaction between an individual and his or her environment.

The theory posits that individuals, including students and teachers, exist within multiple interconnected systems or layers, known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. These systems interact and influence one another, and they affect an individual's development and behavior. The microsystem is the layer closest to the individual, it refers to the immediate settings in which the person lives and works, such as family, school, and peers. The mesosystem is the linkage between the microsystems, it refers to the relationship between the different systems that affect the individual. The exosystem refers to settings that the individual does not have direct contact with, but that still affect him or her, such as parents' workplace, media, and policies. The macrosystem is the culture and society in which an individual lives. In the context of this research, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory could be used to examine the school as a microsystem, and the interactions between the school and other systems, such as the family and community, as mesosystems. This could help to understand how these different systems interact and influence the school climate. Additionally, this theory could be used to examine the impact of larger societal and cultural factors on the school climate. In this way, this theory could provide a holistic view of the school climate and help identify how different systems within and outside the school can be influenced to optimize the school climate.

This study will provide insight for district schools to improve their school climate and academic achievement. Identifying areas of weakness can prompt the school principal to devote more resources to enhancing the school climate, simultaneously improving academic achievement. Thus, investigating teachers' and school leaders' perceptions of how school climate affects student achievement indicated areas for intervention and improvement and provided examples of success and triumph. Previous research suggests that a principal should have several positive characteristics to optimize the school climate; however, there is little empirical evidence that the principal's specific interpersonal skills, communication, trustworthiness, empathy, and problem-solving skills improve the school climate (Cohen, Pickeral & McCloskey 2009). However, there are hardly any studies available that show a link between a school's principal's interpersonal skills and school climate. Justice (2018) revealed the significance of interpersonal skills in elementary school students' performance. Other research mentioned that the school's success and improvement depend on the principals' communication skills. Honesty, trustworthiness, empathy, and problem solving are important interpersonal skills for school principals.

Blase, & Blase, (2007) Research on 800 principals in American High Schools suggests that institutional leadership behavior comprises three aspects: interacting with teachers (conferencing), known as interpersonal skills; promoting teachers' professional growth; and fostering teacher reflection for school climate optimization. This study applies Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) to evaluate the perceived impact of principal interpersonal skills on the optimization of the educational environment Lippard *et al.*, (2017) conducted a study to test Bronfenbrenner's theory. They found that the school climate plays a significant role in academic achievement and behavior development among all stakeholder groups in the school like the principal, teachers, students, and parents. These relationships are important for children's development and support the Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory will be integrated as a theoretical framework.

Khattak, Yaqoob & Basri (2003) the principal's active role in developing school climate makes it imperative for the school head to possess interpersonal skills. Such a cadre of attributes as well as barriers in the professional dealings of a principal for school climate optimizations are a) Communication, b) Trustworthiness, c) Empathy, and d) Problem solving.

According to Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky's (2020) description of Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory, the interpersonal layer reflects the communication between the school principal and the school environment, including the teachers, and primarily refers to the teacher's relationships with his students, other teachers, and the professional team. Teacher retention depends on factors like relationships among teachers. This conceptual study contributed by finding out through teachers' perceptions that if a principal has the interpersonal skills, he can develop a positive climate in a school for teachers, which will further result in a positive perception of teachers as well as optimise the school climate.

2.4 **Interpersonal Leadership in the Context of School Climate**

Interpersonal skills are keys to effective leadership through communication. According to Gumus, E. (2019), the key element of principals' communication is listening. Furthermore, leaders' communication elucidates the school's mission and goals.

The school's success and improvement depend on the principals' communication skills. Honesty and trustworthiness are important interpersonal skills for school principals, Hallam (2013). Yulianti (2019) further elaborated that if the principal changes school policies without taking teachers into confidence, then the school climate will be adversely affected, and the teachers will not trust the principal. The trust factor is important; due to trust, the principals will be able to create a strong school team (Polega *et al.*, 2019). According to Jefferies *et al.*, (2021), empathy is part of interpersonal skills, which play a role in educational interventions and development. Qian (2021) explained that empathy is care for students that is conveyed by giving them importance. When principals celebrate the success of students and teachers by appreciating them, then empathy can be practiced in school.

Swart, Pottas & Maree (2022) elaborated that empathy in the school climate is intended to encourage and care for the students and teachers, which will bring about a great change in the institutional environment. The principals should provide support, feedback, and resources to students and teachers to result in academic excellence at the school. This support includes making resources available in the school classrooms and meeting with teachers to find out their needs and requirements, as well as to help them in hard times. Haslip, Allen-Handy & Donaldson (2019) mentioned that the principals support the teachers in difficult times by having an added value of empathy. A recent dimension of creativity in the domain of interpersonal skills. Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg (2019) explained

that vision is knowing where the organization is and where it wants to go in the future. Nichols & Stahl (2019) further mentioned that the principal is accountable for academics in the school. Therefore, he is the one who encourages and motivates the teachers to create an effective academic and instructional climate in the school. As the role model, the principals can persuade the teachers to be creative. Vision is linked to creativity. Vision is, in fact, where we are now and where we want to go in the future.

Problem solving is also an important interpersonal skill. Marasan (2021) established that the principal is responsible for solving problems within the school. It is a source of problem-solving Alford (2019) mentioned that the principal uses many techniques to solve problems and has many characteristics, such as confidentiality, caring, justice, respect for others, strength, and a desire reinforce relationships and the school's mission. An experienced principal solves problems more easily than a novice administrator. Experience helps the principal solve the problems (Tingle, Corrales & Peters 2019). Hence, it is evident that problem-solving can be learned. Baptiste (2019) explained that the school climate is influenced by the principals' leadership styles and characteristics. It affects the performance and satisfaction of teachers and students. As the key stakeholder, the principals' intellectual relations develop a culture of caring or friendliness in school, as perceived by the students and teachers. The school climate has an influential role in affecting the contentment and attainment of students and teachers (Aldridge, McChesney & Afari 2020).

Students' engagement is linked to the school climate (Civitillo *et al.*, 2021). There is greater engagement of students and teachers when they perceive that they are cared for by the school leader (Day, Sammons & Gorgen 2020) In the school climate, there is a willingness to help each other when the staff projects and promotes a climate of learning and caring (Blitz, Yull & Clauhs 2020). Ryu, Walls & Seashore Louis (2022) study indicated that students and teachers were more productive and successful when they perceived a sense of caring from the principals. The supervisor who cares about employees' well-being had a direct positive impact on individuals' performance (Salas-Vallina, Alegre & López-Cabrales 2021). Teacher retention is one of the factors associated with a positive school climate (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky 2020). hold that stress and burnout among staff will arise if the school has a negative climate. There is respect, mutual trust, cooperative learning, and teamwork in schools where there is a positive school climate (Baafi, 2021). It is evident from this study that there is a relationship between interpersonal leadership and school climate. Both are inter-related and connected variables with each other. The school will have a positive climate if the principal has effective interpersonal skills. If the principal lacks interpersonal skills, the school climate will suffer, and this bad perception will have repercussions for school quality assurance, academic achievement, and performance.

2.5 Soft Skills: Interpersonal Leadership and School Climate

A school principal is a linchpin in an institution. As a leader, he/she must possess several characteristics in various domains: academic and professional excellence, intelligence, leadership, motivation, emotional stability etc. suggested by Leithwood & Jantzi (2000). A range of soft skills, as identified earlier, include communication, empathy, being trustworthy and honest, decision-making, conflict management, problem solving, and creativity. Communication occupies a critical role for effective leadership as originally identified by Hitt & Player (2019). Listening skills form a key element in this endeavor. Stronge, J. H., & Xu, X. (2021), pointing out that a principal's open communication is regarded as the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives, which makes organizational members safe and respected. This, in turn, makes the staff innovative and productive, culminating in a positive climate. Leadership promotes a positive institutional climate and professional skills in human undertakings are derived from soft skills (Majluf

& Abarca 2021). The corollary is better communication skills, more effective leadership, and a more positive work environment. The cumulative results hold that the leader's behavior greatly effects organizational climate, creates trust, effective communication, and empathy as key factors in establishing a positive organizational climate, Swart, Pottas & Maree (2021) contributed to a positive organizational climate. Trustworthiness or honesty is another factor in educational leadership. Trust is the key factor for effective communication. It builds up principal ability, capability, encouragement, and motivation for teambuilding to achieve the 31 desired goals (Leithwood 2019). Reliability, consistency, and follow-up are key elements of trust, according to Brezicha & Fuller (2019).

Empathy is the key variable in the psychology of human behavior, or emotional intelligence. Originally, empathy was used by the great Muslim scholar, Imam Ghazali, in the 10th century. In educational leadership the term was used by Aldrup, Carstensen & Klusmann (2022) for recognizing the efforts of teachers and students. It is associated with caring, attending to their needs and healing their psychological sufferings (Leithwood 2019). Bolner (2020) emphasized the significance of problem-solving as a 21st century skill and its crucial role in optimizing the school climate for school leaders, teachers, and students, leading to an enhanced learning environment and improved classroom learning outcomes. This set of variables, including problem-solving, creativity, and visionary leadership, was not considered an element in this study as the criterion variable. Principal Softs Communication skills, trustworthiness, empathy, problem solving, and interpersonal skills are all related and can be used interchangeably. As school leaders possess these soft skills, they promote a positive institutional climate. There is a correlation between soft skills and interpersonal leadership.

The relationship between interpersonal leadership and soft skills is deep and paramount. Although the term originated in the industrial domain, its extension to educational leadership emerged through research in social disciplines and applied sciences, like education and administrative sciences, as an instrument for students' academic success. According to Alanya Beltran *et al.*, (2021), the principal's leadership and empowerment of the team have a significant impact on school operations, resources, and academic performance. Communication, direction, and coordination are all affected by principally shared leadership. It encourages the teachers to enhance their soft skills with problem solving and interpersonal relationships, Yao & Tuliao (2019). The school principal interacts with the school climate through his soft skills or interpersonal skills for the optimization of school performance. Leadership creates a climate of trust, which is dependent on empathic ingredients with reference to empathy, trustworthiness, and communication leading to a collaborative environment.

Empirical research on the utilization of principals' soft skills and school climate is relatively limited. This is accounted for with more studies in types of leadership and attitudinal scales in principals' soft-rated emotional intelligence. Schools with positive school climates and schools with poor school climates formed the attitude of the principal in adverse conditions, Pineda-Báez *et al.*, (2019). A recent study by Evangelista (2022) established a link between effective principals and well-developed emotional intelligence, despite the lack of literature linking soft skills and school climate.

3. **Methods**

The research methodology used in this paper was a comprehensive literature review to develop a conceptual framework on the role of the interpersonal skills of school principals in optimizing a positive school climate. This study provides insight for district schools to improve their school climate and academic achievement. The literature review was conducted through a comprehensive search of relevant academic sources, and the findings were summarized and discussed in the body of the paper.

4. Results and Discussion

Dolebo's (2021) study revealed that most school principals place a high value on interpersonal relationships and want everyone to be happy. The study also found that internal and external factors influence the ability of school leaders to carry out their responsibilities. The results of these studies suggest a correlation between principals' instructional leadership and school success. Improving the instructional leadership of school principals can enhance curriculum delivery, teaching-learning strategies, academic assessment, teaching professionalism and behavior, and monitoring and engagement, which will ultimately contribute to school climate optimization. Bush (2019) highlights that as the global economy grows, more governments are recognizing the value of their people and the importance of developing a highly skilled workforce, which requires trained and committed teachers and the leadership of highly effective principals. However, some critics argue that the influence of leadership is neutral, and that leadership needs to be grounded in firm personal and professional values. Dumulescu & Muţiu (2021) state that the primary role of a leader is to unify people around key values. Research in 12 effective schools in England and Wales by Bush (2019) found that good leaders are informed by and communicate clear personal and educational values that represent their moral purposes for the school. Based on the cited literature, the role of vision in effective educational leadership is widely acknowledged. According to Mombourquette (2017), vision is a crucial element in effective leadership and is related to several key aspects of leadership, as described by Xhomara (2018) in the work of Bennis and Nanus (1985). This includes having a vision for the organization, communicating the vision in a way that inspires commitment among members, giving meaning to the vision through effective communication, and institutionalizing the vision for long-term success.

The results of this conceptual research suggest that a school principal is a crucial figure in an educational institution and must possess various qualities, including academic professionalism, intelligence, leadership, motivation, emotional stability, and communication skills, as identified by Leithwood & Jantzi (2000). Effective communication, which includes listening skills, is considered the most critical variable for effective leadership by Hitt and Player (2019). Strong and Xu (2021) found that open communication by the principal is the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives, leading to a positive organizational climate.

Leadership that promotes a positive organizational climate and professional development is derived from soft skills, such as trustworthiness and honesty, empathy, problem-solving, and conflict management (Majluf & Abarca 2021). The results of Hartinah *et al*., (2020) and Swart, Pottas & Maree (2021) show that the leader's behavior greatly affects the organizational climate, creating trust, effective communication, and empathy as key factors in establishing a positive organizational climate. Trust is crucial for powerful communication and building up the principal's ability, capability, encouragement, and motivation for team building and achieving desired goals (Leithwood 2019). According to Brezicha & Fuller (2019), trustworthiness, reliability, consistency, and follow-up are key elements of trust.

Empathy is an important element of emotional intelligence and is associated with caring, need-attending, and healing in educational leadership (Leithwood 2019). Bolner (2020) highlighted the significance of problem-solving as a 21st-century skill and its crucial role in optimizing the school climate for school leaders, teachers, and students, leading to enhanced learning outcomes. The results of this research suggest that a school principal is a crucial figure in an educational institution. Effective leadership by a principal requires a range of soft skills and personal characteristics, including academic and professional intelligence, motivation, and emotional stability, as identified by Leithwood & Jantzi (2000). Communication is considered a critical variable for effective leadership and includes listening

skills, as pointed out by Hitt and Player (2019). A principal's open communication has been identified as the most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives, leading to a positive organizational climate and increased productivity among staff (Stronge & Xu, 2021).

Leadership skills such as trustworthiness, honesty, and empathy are also key components of effective educational leadership. Trust is a critical factor for effective communication and building a positive work environment (Leithwood 2019). Empathy, as a component of emotional intelligence, is associated with caring for and addressing the psychological needs of teachers and students (Aldrup, Carstensen & Klusmann 2022). Problem-solving is also crucial in optimizing the school climate and enhancing learning outcomes (Bolner, 2020). Interpersonal skills, including communication, trustworthiness, empathy, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, are all interrelated and can contribute to a positive institutional climate. This research indicates a correlation between these soft skills and effective interpersonal leadership in schools. This study aims to examine the impact of interpersonal skills on effective educational leadership. The research framework is based on the following components:

School Principals as Key Figures: The study acknowledges that school principals are crucial figures in educational institutions and must possess a range of personal and professional qualities, including academic and professional intelligence, leadership, motivation, emotional stability, and communication skills (Leithwood & Jantzi 2000).

Interpersonal Skills: The study identifies interpersonal skills, such as trustworthiness, honesty, empathy, problem-solving, and conflict management, as key components of effective educational leadership (Majluf & Abarca 2021).

Communication: Communication is considered a critical variable for effective leadership and includes listening skills (Hitt & Player, 2019). Open communication by the principal has been identified as the most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives (Stronge & Xu, 2021).

Trust: Trust is a critical factor for effective communication and building a positive work environment (Leithwood 2019). Trustworthiness, reliability, consistency, and follow-up are key elements of trust (Brezicha & Fuller 2019).

Empathy: Empathy is a component of emotional intelligence and is associated with caring for and addressing the psychological needs of teachers and students (Aldrup, Carstensen & Klusmann 2022).

Problem-Solving: Problem-solving is crucial to optimizing the school climate and enhancing learning outcomes (Bolner, 2020).

Positive Organizational Climate: The study highlights that the leader's behavior greatly affects the organizational climate, and that trust, effective communication, and empathy are key factors in establishing a positive organizational climate (Swart, Pottas & Maree (2021).

School Success: The study suggests a correlation between principals' interpersonal skills and effective leadership, which ultimately contributes to school success (Dolebo, 2021).

The conceptual framework suggests that a school principal's interpersonal skills and effective communication are critical factors in promoting a positive organizational climate, enhancing learning

outcomes, and contributing to school success. The study aims to further explore these relationships and provide insights into the role of interpersonal skills in effective educational leadership.

The present research aimed to explore the role of a school principal in an educational institution and the qualities necessary for effective leadership. The results, based on a review of the literature, highlight that most school principals place a high value on interpersonal relationships and want everyone to be happy. Moreover, the study found that both internal and external factors influence the ability of school leaders to carry out their responsibilities. The findings suggest a correlation between a principal's instructional leadership and school success. Improving the instructional leadership of school principals can contribute to better curriculum delivery, teaching-learning strategies, academic assessment, teaching professionalism, monitoring, and engagement, ultimately leading to a better school climate. The recognition of the importance of a highly skilled workforce, driven by the growth of the global economy, has resulted in governments placing a higher value on education and the leadership of effective school principals. The role of vision in effective educational leadership is widely acknowledged, with a clear and communicated vision being crucial for inspiring commitment and long-term success. The results of the research indicate that a school principal must possess various qualities, including academic professionalism, intelligence, leadership, motivation, emotional stability, and communication skills. Effective communication, including listening skills, is considered the most critical variable for effective leadership. Open communication by the principal is the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives, leading to a positive organizational climate.

Leadership that promotes a positive organizational climate and professional development is derived from soft skills, such as trustworthiness, honesty, empathy, problem-solving, and conflict management. The leader's behavior greatly affects the organizational climate and trust, effective communication, and empathy are key factors in establishing a positive organizational climate. Trust is critical for powerful communication and building up the principal's ability and motivation for team building and goal attainment. Empathy, as a component of emotional intelligence, is associated with caring for and addressing the psychological needs of teachers and students. Problem-solving is also crucial to optimizing the school climate and enhancing learning outcomes.

This research highlights the importance of effective leadership in schools. It is evident that the role of a school principal is crucial to the success of an educational institution and requires a range of soft skills and personal characteristics. A school principal must possess academic professionalism, intelligence, motivation, emotional stability, and strong communication skills, with open communication being the single most important factor for school improvement initiatives. In addition, the results suggest that effective leadership is also characterized by trustworthiness, empathy, problem-solving, and effective interpersonal skills, which contribute to a positive organizational climate and enhanced learning outcomes for teachers and students. The literature reviewed in this study supports the notion that vision, and values are critical elements of effective educational leadership. A leader must have a clear vision for the organization and communicate it in a way that inspires commitment and long-term success. Furthermore, research shows that a leader's behavior greatly affects the organizational climate, and trust, effective communication, and empathy are key factors in establishing a positive work environment.

5. Conclusion

Considering these findings, it is important for school leaders to prioritize their personal and professional development in these areas. By improving their leadership skills and qualities, school principals can enhance the curriculum delivery, teaching-learning strategies, academic assessment,

and overall school climate, leading to greater success and satisfaction among teachers, students, and the wider community.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the critical role that school principals play in the success of educational institutions and highlights the importance of soft skills and personal qualities in effective leadership. Further research is needed to better understand how school leaders can be supported in their professional development and to explore the broader implications of these findings for educational policy and practice.

6. Declarations

6.1 **Ethics approval and consent to participate:** This study includes a review of previous research papers and articles in the field of study. The study includes all references.

6.2 **Conflict of interests:** Not applicable.

6.3 **Acknowledgement:** All the authors are acknowledged, and all the required details are mentioned.

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