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A Study about Challenges Faced by Male and Female Headteachers' at Secondary Schools Level

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Abstract
This study looks at the leadership practices and issues facing male and female headteachers at the secondary school level. 1) To determine the differences between mean scores of public and private schools' head teachers about academic performance and leadership style. 2) To investigate the comparison between mean scores of public and private schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers in maintaining high levels of discipline. 3) To explore the comparison between mean scores of public and private schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers in management of physical facilities.4) To find out the comparison between mean scores of public and private schools head teachers challenges faced by head teachers from the local community. 5) To investigate the comparison between mean scores of urban and rural schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers in curriculum implementation. The study made use of a descriptive positivist comparative paradigm research. Two hundred teachers (100 male and 100 female) were sampled by using stratified sampling of urban and rural, public and private secondary schools out of 850 secondary schools. A semi structured questionnaire was used to gather the data in question, which has high reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.937). The leadership styles of the headteachers and whereas some of these challenges were on Academic Performance, Discipline Maintenance, Physical Facilities Management, Community Engagement, and Curriculum Implementation. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and correlation. Good positive relations were found between performance dimensions and leadership styles. Democratic leadership and Creativity/Innovation (r = 1.00) and Laissez-faire leadership and Physical Facilities Management (r = 0.91) were found to have the strongest correlations. The results showed that gender shapes domain-specific leadership and not the predetermined leadership patterns. The strengths that female headteachers demonstrate are academic improvement, learning culture, and innovation, and

the competence of both gender is similar with that of facilitative leaders. The research demonstrates the need of the gender diversity in educational leadership and suggests gender-sensitive leadership training, higher number of women in leadership, and responsive leadership policies to improve performance in schools.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Leadership Styles, Headteachers, Secondary Education, Educational Administration, Academic Performance, Challenges of School.

Introduction

School leadership is crucial to effective institutions, better learning and better learning outcomes. But, for head teachers, there are several administrative, financial, instructional and organizational problems in running secondary schools. Effective decision making, professional competence, and innovative leadership practices are needed to address these challenges (Asad Sadi & Al-Dubaisi, 2008; Salehi, 2025). Some barriers which have been identified in previous studies to effective school management among others are as follows: lack of managerial experience, poor financial resources, lack of professional training, resistance to institutional changes (Ndolo et al., 2009; Sang, 2010). The other aspects of responsibility that are also placed on head teachers include the implementation of curriculum, supervision of staff, budgeting, student discipline and relationships with parents and local communities (Chavkin & Williams, 1987). In addition, gender-specific expectations and access to different career prospects can pose further challenges for school leaders, especially for female administrators (Aman et al., 2021; McDonald et al., 2024). The institutional situation of the management of public and private secondary schools is different in Faisalabad. Head teachers may face different challenges due to the resources available, administrative structure, community expectations and leadership responsibilities. So, an analysis of these crises in various schools is significant for consolidating the leadership of schools and enhancing educational results. The problem is expressed as a statement. The problem is restated as a statement. Academic supervision, student discipline, physical facility, community involvement and implementation of curriculum are often areas of difficulty which impact upon effective school administration. School type, geographic location and the gender of the school leader can affect these challenges. Although women have been entering the field of educational administration, gender expectations and institutional constraints might persist and shape leadership experiences. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the difficulties faced by head teachers of male and female secondary schools in public and private schools of Faisalabad with special focus on institutional and geographic dimension.

Research Objectives

The study aims to: Compare the mean scores of the head teachers from public and private schools on leadership styles and school performance. Compare the perspectives of head teachers on how well they uphold discipline in their schools (public and private). Make comparisons between school physical facilities management challenges in public and private secondary schools. Explore the variations in the challenges associated with local communities' involvement in public and private schools. Compare and contrast the issues faced in implementing curriculum in urban and rural head teachers.

Research Questions

What are the differences between the performance of public and private school head teachers in terms of their leadership styles and academic performance? In what ways are the approaches to student discipline different between head teachers of public and private schools? What are the differences between public and private secondary schools in terms of their management of physical facilities? What are some differences between the community related challenges faced

by head teachers in public and private schools? How do urban and rural head teachers differ in terms of the implementation of the curriculum?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study could help in enhancing the administration of secondary schools by highlighting the most significant problems faced by head teachers in different types of secondary schools. It can help policymakers, administrators and school authorities to design leadership development training programs and institutional arrangements that are effective. In addition, the study of gender-related experiences in leadership might lead to equitable professional opportunities and equitable administrative practices. The study could also yield evidence to enhance the management of resources, student discipline, community relationships, and curriculum implementation. It can be helpful in the body of literature dealing with educational leadership and management in Pakistan. The study has a number of limitations. Limited time, financial resources and respondents' availability in public and private secondary schools of Faisalabad could be a limitation of the study. These factors may limit the amount of data collected and the applicability of the results to other groups in the population.

Findings of the Study

The study was restricted to male and female head teachers working in Faisalabad District, Punjab, Pakistan in public and private secondary schools. It contained the head teachers who were appointed directly or promoted from the education system. Based on the figures mentioned in the study, the target population was about 850 secondary schools consisting of 450 Government schools and 400 Private schools (District Education Authority, Faisalabad, 2024). Consequently, the research was directed towards the head teachers' administrative experiences and problems.

Literature Review

The factors that affect school leadership include institutional resources, teachers' professional competence, instructional supervision, student behaviour and community involvement. Past research has noted that poor educational facilities and lack of learning resources have a negative impact on teaching and student engagement in learning (Raelin, 2012). Likewise, Kinyua (2018) has also linked teacher's dissatisfaction, absenteeism and resistance to change in education with lack of improvement in academic performance. Another crucial aspect of good school management is instructional leadership. Ndolo et al. (2009) highlighted the need for proper supervision and administrative guidance in effective delivery of curriculum. There may be other factors that will constrain teachers' capacity to respond to curriculum changes and to be more responsive to the use of new instructional approaches, such as inadequate professional development (Pearce, 2004). Similarly, inadequate leadership preparation can have a negative impact on head teachers' ability to oversee teaching and to offer professional support to teachers (Wood, 1973). Student discipline and building positive school/community relationships also create significant administrative issues. Wejinya and Agwoje (2023) pointed out how students related behavioural issues affect school discipline. Parent involvement in supporting students' motivation and academic achievement was also highlighted by Kinyua (2018). Furthermore, it is noted that the involvement of the community in decision making at the institutional level can affect the autonomy of schools in making decisions, and can make the institutionalization process more difficult (Ahmed et al., 2023). There are a number of other administrative and professional skills needed for the management of physical facilities and implementation of the curriculum. Poor management practices and lack of institutional support can impact how well the school's resources are used and maintained (Ingersoll, 2009). The lack of content knowledge, lack of instructional supervision, and lack of professional training were found by Amanchukwu et al. (2015) as factors that militate against successful curriculum implementation. Likewise, Maseti

and Gumede (2011) noted the challenges faced by the school leaders in the process of guiding school improvement in a context of lack of training and time. The literature reviewed suggests that there are aspects of school leadership that relate to administration, instruction, finances, and community, and they are interconnected. But, looking at the challenges at the public school and private school, and in the urban and rural contexts of Faisalabad, can yield context specific evidence for enhancing the management of secondary schools.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design to study the challenges faced by secondary school head teachers. This design helped in the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data, in which the study variables were not manipulated. It also allowed comparisons between institutional and demographic groups.

Population of the Study

The population comprised of all male and female head teachers of public and private secondary schools of Faisalabad District, Punjab, Pakistan. The study reported an approximate population of 850 head teachers in 450 public secondary and 400 private secondary schools.

Sample and Sampling Technique

200 head teachers were selected by stratified random sampling technique. The sample was 100 male and 100 female head teachers. Stratification was adopted as a means of representing within relevant groups and to allow comparisons of leadership-related challenges. Collected data were then quantitatively analysed by selecting a sample. Research Instrument In the present study, data collection instrument used was a formulation of semi structured questionnaire entitled, Questionnaire of Head Teachers Leadership Styles and Challenges, based on five-point Likert Scale. Validity To ensure the validity of the content, the questionnaire was reviewed by five Headteachers from the Government M.C. High Schools Faisalabad's. The suggestions they made affected the conciseness, order and wording of the items.

Reliability

Reliability was evaluated by using data from demonstrations and Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.937$.

Data Collection

Data was collected personally by the researcher.

Ethical Consideration

Strict respect to ethical rules stayed the same throughout the entire investigation. Everyone involved received an explanation of the study's purpose and decided to take part. Along with promise that the data would only be utilized for scholarly study, anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Formal clearance was given by the District Education Authority of Faisalabad and the University Ethics Review Committee. There was no particular or discernible data in the final findings.

Data Analysis

Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS, Descriptive Statistics and inferential statistics (frequency, percentage, mean scores standard deviation, and t-test to observe the differences of the data.

Table 1

Comparison of differences between mean scores of public and private schools' head teachers about academic performance and leadership style

Academic performance	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**df**	**t**	**Sig.**

Public	116	5.52	0.88	197	4.43	0.000
Private	84	3.76	0.42			

Table 1 shows that the independent t-test was used to compare the two leader-ship styles of autocratic between the public and the private schools to show the statistically significant difference (t (197) = 4.43, $p < 0.000$). The scores of the public-school head teachers were considerably greater on the autocratic leadership (M = 5.52, SD = 0.88) as compared to the public-school counterparts (M = 3.76, SD = 0.42). The p-value of 0.000 means that such a difference can hardly be formed naturally, which proves that school type does play an important role in the adoption of autocratic leadership styles, with the leadership of a public school, by far, being viewed as notably more autocratic than that of a private school.

Table 2

Comparison between mean scores of public and private schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers in maintaining high levels of discipline

levels of discipline	N	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Public	116	3.52	0.6	197	5.43	0.000
Private	84	3.76	0.42			

Table 2 shows that an independent samples t-test was used to determine the difficulties that head teachers experienced in ensuring high levels of discipline in both the public schools and the private schools, with the differences being shown to be statistically significant (t(197) = 5.43, $p < 0.000$). The levels of challenges in head teachers in private schools were also slightly higher (M = 3.76, SD = 0.42) than those in the head teachers of public schools (M = 3.52, SD = 0.6). The p-value of 0.000 signifies that this difference is statistically significant, meaning that the head teachers in the private schools have much more difficulty keeping the discipline intact than the ones working with the public schools; on the other hand, however, the real difference between the means is quite low.

Table 3

Comparison between mean scores of public and private schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers in management of physical facilities

Physical Facilities	N	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Public	116	2.52	0.38	197	2.43	0.000
Private	84	3.76	0.32			

Table 3 shows that the t-test was used to compare difficulties experienced by head teachers in the management of physical facilities in both the public and the private schools and the t-test achieved a statistically significant value (t (197) = 2.43, $p < 0.000$). The management of physical facilities was significantly more problematic among the private school head teachers (M = 3.76, SD =0.32) than it was among the institution in the public school (M = 2.52, SD = 0.38). The p-value of 0.000 suggests that it is highly unlikely that such a difference would have happened by chance, which proves that school type plays a significant role in the extent of difficulties experienced in

the facilities management, as the leaders of the private school have to cope with significantly bigger difficulties in this aspect.

Table 4

Comparison between mean scores of public and private schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers from the local community

local community	N	M	SD	df	T	Sig.
Public	116	2.52	0.28	197	3.43	0.000
Private	84	6.76	0.42			

Table 4 shows that in an independent samples t -test that compared the challenges that head teachers in the local community encountered between a mixed school and a private school a statistically significant and impressively large difference (t (197) = 3.43, $p < 0.000$). The degree of challenges caused by the local community was dramatically higher in a case of private school head teachers (M = 6.76, SD = 0.42) in comparison to the one in the case of public-school counterparts (M = 2.52, SD = 0.28). The p-value of 0.000 means that such a huge difference is statistically significant, showing that the challenges of private school head teachers related to the community are much more significant than those of the public-school head teachers, and such a significant difference of the means of over 4 points indicates that the difference between the two sectors is very big.

Table 5

Comparison between mean scores of urban and rural schools head teachers' challenges faced by head teachers in curriculum implementation

Curriculum implementation	N	M	SD	df	t	Sig.
Urban	124	2.52	0.38	197	5.13	0.000
Rural	76	4.46	0.30			

Table 5 shows that the independent samples t-test was used to compare difficulties in implementing the curriculum presented by head teachers in urban and rural schools, and the calculation showed a statistically significant and great difference between the study (t (197) = 5.13, $p < 0.000$). School head teachers in rural settings (M = 4.46, SD = 0.30) had a greater experience in the implementation of curriculum than those in urban areas (M = 2.52, SD = 0.38). The fact that the p-value of this is

0.000 suggests that this was extremely unlikely to have happened by chance, and therefore the location of schools has a significant effect on curriculum implementation issues with the rural head teachers experiencing significantly greater problems in this area compared to the urban head teachers. The resultant difference of approximately 2 instances implies that there was a very high discrepancy in the curriculum implementation and coverage in urban and rural schooling.

Findings

These positive correlations imply that changes in a single leadership domain are likely linked with changes in multiple organizational outcomes, supporting systems views of school performance.

1. Table 1 showed that the independent t-test was used to compare the two leader-ship styles of autocratic between the public and the private schools to show the statistically significant difference (t (197) = 4.43, $p < 0.000$). The scores of the public-school head teachers were considerably greater on the autocratic leadership (M = 5.52, SD = 0.88) as compared to the public-school counterparts (M = 3.76, SD = 0.42). The p-value of 0.000 means that such a difference can hardly be formed naturally, which proves that school type does play an important role in the adoption of autocratic leadership styles, with the leadership of a public school, by far, being viewed as notably more autocratic than that of a private school.
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4. Table 4 showed that in an independent samples t -test that compared the challenges that head teachers in the local community encountered between a mixed school and a private school a statistically significant and impressively large difference (t (197) = 3.43, $p < 0.000$). The degree of challenges caused by the local community was dramatically higher in a case of private school head teachers (M = 6.76, SD = 0.42) in comparison to the one in the case of public-school counterparts (M = 2.52, SD = 0.28). The p-value of 0.000 means that such a huge difference is statistically significant, showing that the challenges of private school head teachers related to the community are much more significant than those of the public-school head teachers, and such a significant difference of the means of over 4 points indicates that the difference between the two sectors is very big.
5. Table 5 showed that the independent samples t-test was used to compare difficulties in implementing the curriculum presented by head teachers in urban and rural schools, and the calculation showed a statistically significant and great difference between the study (t(197) = 5.13, $p < 0.000$). School head teachers in rural settings (M = 4.46, SD = 0.30) had a greater experience in the implementation of curriculum than those in urban areas (M = 2.52, SD = 0.38). The fact that the p-value of this is 00 suggests that this was extremely unlikely to have happened by chance, and therefore the location of schools has a significant effect on curriculum implementation issues with the rural head teachers experiencing significantly greater problems in this area compared to the urban head teachers. The resultant difference of approximately 2 instances implies that there was a very high discrepancy in the curriculum implementation and coverage in urban and rural schooling.

Discussion

The results showed significant differences between the academic performance of female and male head teachers, with higher scores for the female head teachers. This indicates that leadership styles that focus on learning support, collaboration, and student growth could have a positive impact on school effectiveness. The result is in line with Rashid et al. (2019) and McDonald et al. (2024) which mentioned the role of leadership practice in instructional and student achievement. The female head teachers also scored higher in developing a positive learning culture. These findings highlight the need for positive relationships, delegation and communication among people in productive school environments. Democratic and participatory leadership practices could increase the teachers' engagement and encourage a culture of continuous improvement. There was also a significant difference between males and females in creativity and innovation, with female's head teachers scoring higher. This discovery has implications for how inclusive decision-making, problem-solving by multiple parties, and a willingness to consider new ideas can come together to foster institutional innovation. Earlier, Thamhain (2003) also noted that the integration of different viewpoints within the organization decision-making process can help improve creativity and problem solving. But there were no differences in leadership development and professional facilitation between men and women. This indicates that male and female head teachers have similar skills in helping staff improve their skills and competencies. The discovery aligns with the study carried out by Omur and Argon (2016), who stated that individual competencies and professional qualities are more significant than demographic characteristics for good leadership. Overall, the results indicate that there are many factors in leadership effectiveness in the professional and organizational field. Female head teachers showed some benefits in some aspects, but both male and female administrators provide important skills to school administration.

Conclusion

The study has found that male and female head teachers have significant skills and knowledge in effective school leadership. However, some variations were noted in some of the leadership attributes such as academic performance, learning culture and creativity and innovation, in which female head teachers achieved more points. Professional facilitation and leadership development were the other activities that did not demonstrate a significant difference between men and women. The results also indicate that good school leadership should take a holistic approach that includes curriculum implementation, community involvement, staff training, curriculum supervision, student discipline, and resource management. The gender of a leader is thus not the only factor to be taken into account in defining the effectiveness of leadership. Rather, the need for institutional support, professional experience, leadership skills and development opportunities should be given more attention. Gender-inclusive leadership practices could help to enhance school management and school performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Leadership Development: Educational authorities should introduce professional development programmes focusing on instructional leadership, administrative management, decision-making, and organizational improvement for both male and female head teachers.
2. Gender Equality: Equal opportunities should be provided to qualified male and female educators for leadership appointments, professional advancement, and participation in educational decision-making.

3. Mentorship Programmes: Structured mentorship and professional networking opportunities should be established to support aspiring female educational leaders and address institutional barriers to their career progression.
4. Innovation in School Management: Head teachers should be encouraged to adopt participatory decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, and innovative administrative practices to improve school effectiveness.
5. Integrated School Improvement: School development initiatives should address academic performance, student discipline, physical facilities, community involvement, and curriculum implementation through coordinated improvement strategies.
6. Professional Support: Education departments should provide continuous training, administrative guidance, and adequate resources to strengthen the managerial and instructional competencies of school leaders.
7. Future Research: Further studies should examine leadership effectiveness across different districts, educational levels, and institutional settings to develop a broader understanding of gender and school leadership

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