LEADERSHIP EMPOWERING BEHAVIORS: GENDER-BASED COMPARATIVE STUDY AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Leadership, Gender, Empowerment, Behaviors	The study compared the leadership empowering behaviors of male and female secondary school heads in Pakistan. Main purpose of the research is to collate captaincy empowering conduct of male & female educational leaders at the secondary level. The sample was comprised of 564 teachers including 379 males & 185 females employing a stratified random sample technique. In this study, quantitative and descriptive methodologies were used. A standardized tool "Leader Empowering Behavior Questionnaire" was used for data collection. Data was collected and analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, & independent samples t-test. Results explored that there is significant difference (t = 3.160, p = .002) between leadership empowering behavior among male (mean = 5.73, SD = .30) and female leaders (mean = 5.64, SD = .31) on whole. Male leaders were found to have better leadership empowering behavior than female leaders. Thus, it was recommended from results that female educational leaders should further improve and adopt leadership empowering behavior for better organizational productivity and female educational leaders should further improve their empowering behavior so as to stimulate potential of their subordinates for better performance and commitment in diverse situations for desired outcomes.
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INTRODUCTION

In constantly changing working environment, organizations are required to benefit from their human resources to compete in this technologically advanced era for sustaining organizational competitiveness (Nashwan & Hasan, 2020; Bharadwaja & Tripathi, 2021; Jang & Jeong, 2022). It is critical to understand the employees' impressions of their leaders in order to contribute to creating environment where they feel empowered and consequently, they will be enthusiastic

to perform excellently than what is generally anticipated and wish to remained in organization (Sonal, Sangeeta & Vivek, 2019). So, organizations must constantly ensure effective leadership to sustain administrative compliance, improve employees' satisfaction and boost management (Indrianawati, 2010). Thus, the leaders in organizations are liable to provide directions as well as support to their employees which are required for creating an environment that promotes a high degree of work commitment and engagement, particularly in the ever-changing working environments (Ghadi & Fernandos, 2011; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). At present, the fast-tracking advancement of the information-based economies causes changes, indistinctness, and dynamic situations inside organizations (Li, Chiaburu & Kirkman, 2017; Qian, Song, Jin, Wang & Chen, 2018), and therefore, effective leadership has been increasingly stressed to enable organizations to manage the multifaceted and complicated circumstances proficiently (Lee, Willis & Tian, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mullins (2007) claims that leadership is considered as the relationship by which one individual affects the action and behavior of other individuals. Thus, a leader must have distinct, desirable, and appealing attributes like obligation, honesty, hopefulness, integrity, flexibility, and humility transcend gender roles (Callahan & Grunberg, 2016; Kawakami, White & Langer, 2000) for developing a supportive and friendly connection with their subordinates to set up a social and productive relationship in the working team (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Eby & Allen, 2012). The research has revealed that empowering leadership may ensure to provide durable support for their employees through positive administrative practices i.e., inspiration, emotional support, and information sharing (Li et al., 2015). It is the successful and efficient leadership form in which the leaders enhance subordinates' inspiration, motivation and generate self-efficacy and psychological empowerment through delegating the authority among the subordinates (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades and Drasgow, 2000; Li et al., 2017; Qian, Song, Jin, Wang and Chen, 2018). Empowering leadership is an encouraging style where the leader share authority to enhance employees' enthusiasm, motivation, commitment, as well as contributions (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999).

It is a process of establishing the climate that ensures to delegate power with the employees by illustrating the significance of the employees' job, giving them autonomy for decision-making, exhibiting confidence in employees' potential, and also grant them the opportunity to perform according to the existing situation (Arnold et al., 2000). According to MacPhee (2014), leader empowering behavior is a power-sharing and supporting process in which subordinates regard their leaders as allowing them to exercise self-regulation, self-management, self-control, self-administration, and self-leadership. Empowering leadership takes places when leaders boost the trust-based relations with their followers, convey a clear-cut vision to their subordinates, promote participatory decision-making, and direct their followers to be more self-sufficient (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Empowering leaders routinely assign authority and give autonomy to their employees by knowing the worth of their work, signifying trust in their capabilities, ensuring resources, and communicating information, and allowing for more independent and self-directed problem-solving & decision-making opportunities (Martin et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2018).

Aspects of empowering leadership behavior include power delegation, sharing of information, skill development, accountability, self-directed decision-making, and coaching for the creative performances (Konczak et al., 2000). Research studies have investigated that employees may

feel more flexibility in workplace if they may provide more empowerment and autonomy from their leaders (Lee et al., 2018). The leader empowering behaviours have a positive impact upon employees' empowerment (Dierendock & Dijkstra, 2012), turnover intentions (Schmaltz, 2013; Laschinger et al., 2012), well-being, attitude, and performance (Hempel et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2011). Research reveals that subordinates under the supervision of empowering leadership perceive encouragements and assistance from their leaders through the positive persuasions, emotional support, and inspirational statements, making them feel more efficient and stronger about their profession. Cheong et al. (2016) thus found in their study the leader empowering practices for example improving the performance, stimulating participative decision-making, giving autonomy, and showing self-assurance in the high efficiency which make empowering leadership.

Empowering leadership as an enabling process improves the subordinates' self-efficacy which positively influences the subordinates' work performance in organizations (Chen et al., 2007; Konczak et al., 2000; Lorinkova et al., 2013) as well as increasing their intrinsic motivation (Srivastava et al., 2010). Aspects of empowering leadership behavior include delegation of the power, information sharing, skill development, accountability, self-directed decision-making, and coaching for creative performance (Konczak et al., 2000). Leaders make available chances of training their employees to improve their talents in the skill development and training for inventive performance (Konczak et al., 2000; Pearce & Sims, 2002). In this connection, the research has revealed that empowering leadership may ensure to provide durable support for their employees through positive administrative practices i.e., inspiration, emotional support, and information sharing (Li et al., 2015). The literature review indicates that empowering the leadership with respect to gender has been desperately neglected (Knezovic & Musrati, 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to collate the captaincy empowering conduct of male and female educational leaders at the secondary level. The study's conclusions will be helpful in achieving the organizational goals by bringing constructive revolution in the organizational leadership.

Objectives of Study
- ✓ The leadership empowering behaviors of the male and female secondary school heads do not differ significantly.
- ✓ The subdomains of the secondary school heads' empowering leadership behavior do not significantly differ between male and female counterparts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants
This inquiry took place in Kohat, Kurram, Hangu, Karak, and Orakzai districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. All the secondary school teachers (SSTs) of the above-mentioned districts were the population of the study. 30% of the sample subjects were chosen from each district (Suleman et al., 2021). So, using a stratified random sampling technique, a total of 564 SSTs (Male n = 379; Female n = 185) were included in this study (see Table 1 & 2) (Suleman et al., 2021).

Table 1
Population & Sample Rate

	Kohat District		Kurram District		Hangu District	
SSTs	M	F	M	F	M	F

	N	n	N	n	N	n	N	n	N	n	N	n
SSTs (G)	283	85	178	53	65	20	29	09	105	32	46	14
SSTs IT)	13	04	16	05	01	00	01	00	06	02	01	00
SSTs (B/C)	95	29	47	14	33	10	04	01	41	12	13	04
SSTs (P/M)	87	26	35	11	31	09	01	00	34	10	04	01
Total	478	144	276	83	130	39	35	10	186	56	64	19

Table 2
Population & Sample Rate

	Karak District				Orakzai District			
SSTs	M		F		M		F	
	N	n	N	n	N	n	N	n
SSTs (G)	192	58	128	38	46	14	16	05
SSTs (IT)	16	05	11	03	00	00	00	00
SSTs (B/C)	91	27	40	12	14	04	06	02
SSTs (P/M)	98	29	44	13	10	03	01	00
Total	397	119	223	66	70	21	23	7

Key: SSTs = Secondary School Teachers; n = Sample Size; N = Population Size; M = Male; F = Female; G = General; IT = Information Technology; B/C = Biology / Chemistry; P / M = Physics / Mathematics

Research Design
In educational research terminology, the research design is the overarching technique used by the researcher towards systematically and logically manage the different aspects of the study to successfully resolve the research problem. It offers framework for the systematically gathering, measuring, and interpreting data (Vaus, 2006; Suleman et al., 2021). The research design of the study offers a sufficient foundation. The research approach decision is a crucial stage in the research design procedure because it outlines how relevant data will be acquired; nevertheless, the research design process contains several interrelated decisions (Aaker, Kumar, & George, 2000). In this cross-sectional study, the quantitative and descriptive research methodology was used to examine and compare empowering leadership among male and female institutional heads.

Measurements / Tool Development
The questionnaire for leader empowering behavior constructed and validated by Konczak et al. (2000) was used to assess teachers' observations of their empowering leadership. The measure consists of nineteen items constructed on seven-point Likert scale, with 7 'strongly agree', 6 being 'agree', 5 'somewhat agree', 4 being 'neither agree nor disagree', 3 'somewhat disagree', 2 being 'disagree', and 1 'strongly disagree'. The authorization of self-directed decision-making, liability for results, information sharing, skill progress, coaching for creative performance are the six sub-domains of empowering leadership that are covered by this scale (Suleman et al., 2021). Therefore, reliability coefficients between 0.82 & 0.88 were calculated by Konczak et al. (2000).

Data Collection & Analysis
Before data-collecting procedure began, respondents were enlightened about the study's facts, consequences and implications and their informed consents were acquired. They were ensured

that their provided information would be used only for research purposes and kept in privacy. 520 of 564 SSTs voluntarily participated in this cross-sectional study at the lead researcher's invitation. In this connection, the data-collecting process was completed in about nine months (February 15, 2021 to November 10, 2021). In this linking, the response rate was 92.20 percent. So, once the data gathering procedure was completed, the raw data scores were precisely and appropriately presented in tables. The data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistics such as the simple percentage, mean, standard deviation, and independent samples t-test.

RESULTS OF STUDY

Descriptive Analysis

Leadership Empowering Behavior among Male Secondary School Heads
Table 2 reflects that male heads exhibit empowering leadership. Sweeping rate score of LEB was calculated 5.73 and also variance and standard deviation were computed as .087 and .30 respectively which undoubtedly shows positive response of male participants demonstrating that their heads are engaged in empowering leadership. Uttermost appraised subdomains of LEB were self-development (M = 5.77, SD = 0.54) followed by accountability for outcomes (M = 5.74, SD = 0.44). Subdimensions of LEB were rated as information sharing (M = 5.73, SD = 0.60), Coaching for self-directed decision making (M= 5.71, SD = 0.51), delegation of authority (M = 5.70, SD = 0.50) and innovative performance (M= 5.73, SD= 0.39). The male educational leaders have adopted empowering behaviors to motivate underlings to achieve organizational objectives.

Leadership Empowering Behaviour among Female Secondary School Heads
Table 2 depicts that female heads are engaged in empowering behavior. The LEB's total mean score was 5.64, and its variance and SD were determined as .099 and .31, respectively. These results clearly show that female participants responded favorably to the LEB of their leaders. Accountability for results received highest rating (M = 5.72, SD = 0.44), followed by coaching for IP (M = 5.68, SD = 0.43), and IS (M = 5.68, SD = 0.55). Delegation of authority (M = 5.65, SD = 0.43), self-directed decision making (M = 5.61, SD = 0.47) and self-development (M = 5.53, SD = 0.59) were the other LEB subdomains that received ratings. It clearly demonstrates that female leaders partake in empowering behavior to motivate their staff to deliver quality work.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Leadership Empowering Behaviour (LEB)

	Male Secondary-School-Heads						
	Min	Max	Mean ± SD	σ2	SEM	Skewness	Kurtosis
OLEB	4.94	6.65	5.73 ± 0.30	0.087	0.016	0.249	0.461
Delegation of Authority	3.33	6.67	5.70 ± 0.50	0.253	0.027	-1.060	2.543
Accountability for Outcomes	4.33	7.00	5.74 ± 0.44	0.196	0.024	-0.244	0.790
Self-Directed Decision making	4.00	7.00	5.71 ± 0.51	0.262	0.027	-0.629	1.152
Information Sharing	3.00	7.00	5.73 ± 0.60	0.362	0.032	-0.688	0.964
Self-Development	3.67	7.00	5.77 ± 0.54	0.290	0.029	-0.452	0.809
Coaching Innovative Performance	4.00	6.67	5.73 ± 0.39	0.153	0.021	-0.340	1.615

Key: OLEB = Overall Leadership Empowering Behaviour

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of Leadership Empowering Behaviour (LEB)

	Min	Max	Mean ± SD	σ2	SEM	Skewness	Kurtosis
Female Secondary-School-Heads							
OLEB	4.76	6.59	5.64 ± 0.31	0.099	0.024	0.318	0.789
Delegation of Authority	4.33	6.67	5.65 ± 0.43	0.183	0.033	-0.257	0.074
Accountability for Outcomes	4.33	7.00	5.72 ± 0.44	0.193	0.034	0.275	0.779
Self-Directed Decision making	4.00	7.00	5.61 ± 0.47	0.217	0.036	-0.897	1.807
Information Sharing	4.00	7.00	5.68 ± 0.55	0.305	0.043	-0.398	0.216
Self-Development	3.67	6.67	5.53 ± 0.59	0.348	0.046	-0.644	0.398
Coaching Innovative Performance	4.00	6.67	5.68 ± 0.43	0.188	0.034	-0.725	1.389

Inferential Analysis

H1: There exists no significant variation between the leadership empowering behavior among male and female secondary school heads.

In order to verify the hypotheses, independent samples t-test was applied. Table 3 presents the independent samples t-test analysis of leadership empowering behavior of male and female heads. Overall leadership empowering behavior analysis revealed that calculated t-value was found 3.160 which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) as it is greater than the tabulated value of t (1.648) at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence hypothesis "There exists no significant variation between leadership empowering behavior among male and female secondary school heads" was rejected. It clearly shows that male heads (M = 5.73, SD = 0.30) stronger with respect to leadership empowering behavior than female educational leaders (M = 5.64, SD = 0.31) at the secondary level.

H2: There exists no significant variation between the subdomains of leadership empowering behavior among male and female secondary school heads.

Table 5
Self-reliant Samples t-test of Leadership Empowering Behavior of Male & Female

Variables	Male	Female	MD	SEd	t	p
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD				
1.OLEB	5.73 ± 0.30	5.64 ± 0.31	0.09	0.03	3.160	0.002*
2. Delegation of Authority	5.70 ± 0.50	5.65 ± 0.43	0.05	0.04	1.112	0.267
3. Accountability for Outcomes	5.74 ± 0.44	5.72 ± 0.44	0.02	0.04	0.484	0.629
4. Self-Directed Decision making	5.71 ± 0.51	5.61 ± 0.47	0.10	0.05	2.140	0.033*
5. Information Sharing	5.73 ± 0.60	5.68 ± 0.55	0.05	0.05	0.911	0.363
6. Self-Development	5.77 ± 0.54	5.53 ± 0.59	0.24	0.05	4.592	0.000*
7. Coaching Innovative Performance	5.73 ± 0.39	5.68 ± 0.43	0.05	0.04	1.320	0.187

* Significant; df = 518; table value of t at 0.05 =1.648
Key: OLEB = Overall Leadership Empowering Behavior

Table objective samples t-test analysis for subdomains shows that, at 0.05 level of confidence, computed t-values for self-directed decision-making and self-development were determined to be 2.140 and 4.592, respectively, higher than reported t-value (1.648). It reveals that male

secondary school heads are more engaged in both subdomains, namely self-directed decision-making and self-development, than female educational leaders. The calculated t-values for the remaining four subdomains, including delegation of the authority, answerability for the results, information sharing, and coaching for innovative performance, however, were found to be 0.267, 0.629, 0.363, and 0.187 respectively, which are lower than the tabulated t-value (1.648) at the level of 0.05 confidence. It means that there is no compelling distinction between these four subdomains of the leadership empowering behavior among male and female heads. Hence the hypothesis "There exists no significant variation between the subdomains of leadership empowering behavior among the male and female secondary school heads" was thus partially accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study compared leadership behaviors that empowered male and female secondary school heads. The leadership empowering behavior have been examined in relation to other variables in different fields of the academic world (Abuzid & Abbas, 2017; Bester et al., 2015; Cai et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2011; Park et al., 2017; MacPhee et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2018; Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012; Van Dijke et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2018). But unfortunately, it has not been examined with respect to gender differences, especially in Pakistan. Therefore, the researchers have made attempt to fill this gap through this cross-sectional study. The results showed that educational leaders, both male and female, engaged in empowering behavior, like delegation oof authorization, answerability, information sharing, skill development, self-directed decision-making, and coaching for the innovative performance to influence their subordinates for better performance. They delegate power and grant autonomy to their employees by recognizing the value of employment, demonstrating trust in capabilities, transferring resources, information, and providing greater opportunities for the autonomous and self-directed decision-making and problem-solving (Lee et al., 2018; Li et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2013). They were found to recast and assign new responsibilities to subordinates and make them accountable for results (Konczak et al., 2000). For smooth operation of the organization, they exchange information with employees & employees communicate it with others (Konczak et al., 2000; Pearce & Sims, 2002).

They were found to empower their employees by allowing and involving them in the problem-solving process (Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2012). They give training chances for their employee to improve their abilities (Pearce & Sims, 2002). Comparatively, the study found that overall, male educational leaders were more engaged in leadership empowering behavior as compared to female educational leaders. In just two subdomains, such as self-directed decision-making and self-development, were male educational leaders shown to be more engaged than female educational leaders; nevertheless, in other subdomains, such as delegation of the jurisdiction, answerability for outcomes, advice sharing, and coaching for the innovative performance there was no compelling distinction between both male and female leaders were thus found equally engaged. Conversely, Knezovic and Musrati (2018) found that there was rquired significant difference in empowering leadership, and female employees put more value on empowering leaders. Aldoory and Tooth (2009) found that a slight variation between the male and female employees' perceptions about the leadership effectiveness. On the other hand, Durrah et al. (2014) observed no significant difference between the male and female workers' perceptions of empowerment when expressing their thoughts to determine if their boss is a successful leader or not.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it was discovered that both the male and female educational leaders engaged in leadership empowering behaviors to influence their subordinates for the better performance. These behaviors included the assignment of power, advice sharing, answerability, self-reliant decision-making, skill advancement, and coaching for innovative eachievements. In general, it was discovered that the male educational leaders engaged in more behaviors that empowered leadership compared to the female educational leaders. Male educational leaders were shown to be more engaged than female counterparts in only two subdomains, namely self-directed decision-making and self-development, however in other subdomains, such as delegation of authority, male educational leaders were found to be less engaged. responsibility for results, sharing of information, and mentoring for creative performance. In this connection, both male and female leaders were found to be equally engaged, and there was no discernible difference. The study suggests that female educational leaders should further improve their empowering behavior in order to stimulate the potential of their subordinates for better performance and commitment.

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