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Impact of Heads' Leadership Styles on School Environment at Secondary Level in Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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ABSTRACT

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the school environment, directly influencing teacher performance and student well-being. Understanding these dynamics can help develop more effective leadership strategies to create a positive and supportive educational setting. The study focused on leadership styles and school environment among female secondary school teachers in southern districts. A quantitative survey design was used. The population for the study included all female teachers serving in public secondary schools of the southern districts, consisting of 159 institutions with a total of 1512 teachers. The data was collected from 307 teachers through stratified sampling technique using a self-developed "Leadership Styles Questionnaire" (LSQ) and School Environment Questionnaire (SEQ). The research instruments were reviewed by experts and finalized the statements, after which a pilot study, involving 31 teachers, was conducted. The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha value yielded strong internal consistency values of 0.82 for the Leadership Styles Questionnaire and 0.78 for the School Environment Questionnaire, thereby establishing both instruments as valid and reliable for the main study. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the to achieve the first and second objectives, and inferential statistics such as Pearson Coefficient correlation and regression were used to achieve the rest of the objectives. Findings revealed that school heads predominantly adopted a directive leadership style, emphasizing clear objectives, structured supervision, and strict rule enforcement. Regarding the physical environment there were adequate facilities for arts, music, and sports, but issues with classroom space, fencing, and restrooms were noted.

Key Words: Heads' Leadership Styles, School Environment, Secondary Level, KP

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership plays a key role in any endeavor that requires motivation and guidance towards particular goals. Wahyudi (2015) noted that "Effectiveness of leadership is always an outcome of interplay between a leader and the situation." For distinctly defined educational outcomes, a leader has to actively and strategically lead educational policies and programs. This leadership effectiveness is a function of the leader's behaviour and the situation, a concept termed as leadership (Setiyadi & Inirwana, 2022). This applies to various sectors such as governments, companies, and educational institutions, as they all require effective leadership. In the educational context, the principles of educational administration determine to a large extent the concept of leadership in the schools. A school manager's core function is to collect, organize, and efficiently mobilize all resources of the school to realize the goals that the principal has set. The level of education provided at the school is the outcome of the principal's managerial competence, together with the supportive role of the teachers and other staff, and this is a measure of the school's effectiveness and success (Rali, 2017).

Hamdi and Bahruddin (2014) defined leadership as an approach employed by school heads to encourage subordinate staff to shoulder responsibilities in achieving the set objectives of the school. A competent school principal can enhance teacher performance by providing adequate training programs for school staff. This strengthens the notion that a principal should have the desired personality and traits as well as the leadership skills to navigate the school. A principal can only be deemed a leader if he or she meets the staff's needs to enhance retention and acceptable performance. The principal also holds the responsibility of assessing educational activities and their related outcomes as well as the professional development of the trainers. The Principal is very important in the area of training and education of the teachers and the development of the skills and the performance of the teachers and the students (Setiyadi &Inirwana, 2022).

On the other hand, the educational setting plays a major role in reshaping and developing knowledge. However, positive and encouraging school environments, along with an abundance of learning resources and a fortunate climate, make students happier and more focused on their academic achievements, which lead to high academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Horne and Staniszewski (2003), Saxon (2005) believe that hostile activities or any form of school aggression can create poor learning environment which is not conducive to learning as it negatively affects

pupils emotionally, contributes to pupils' low academic achievement and increases dropout rates. Oyetunji, (2006), contends that teachers disturb pupils in other subtle ways. He reports that research has revealed that teachers can and do intimidate pupils by mocking, insulting or ridiculing them. He is of the opinion that intimidating pupils de-motivates and causes pupils to misbehave and more than that pupils feel abused and thus they are upset for a long time. Among the numerous factors the school environment, shape by the leadership style of school heads' stands out as a significant determinant. Oyetunji, (2006), points out that people working in schools are expected to create civilized environment where pupils are molded to be humane, caring and competent in handling issues in their lives. Therefore, there was an urgent need for a systematic study to examine the impact of heads' leadership styles on school environment, with a particular focus on how these factors contribute to quality education in the southern districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To evaluate heads' leadership styles as perceived by female teachers at secondary school level.
- (2) To assess selected dimensions of school environment at secondary level.
- (3) To determine the impact of heads' leadership styles on school environment.

Research Ouestions

- 1. What different leadership styles are practiced as perceived by female teachers at secondary school level?
- 2. What is the status of school environment at secondary level?

Research Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses (Ho): There is no significant impact of different leadership styles on the existed school environment at secondary school level.

Significance of the Study

The current research's pertinence held significant value in exploring novel phenomena within the leadership context. It investigated the creation of an appropriate environment and illuminated the ways in which heads of educational institutions employ different leadership styles. By manipulating environmental factors, the research would show how these factors are interconnected and emphasize the duty of heads to model a positive mindset and the enjoyment of their teaching staff in carrying out their assigned tasks. The study's conclusions would be a useful tool for educational leaders looking to adopt particular leadership philosophies, which would ultimately create a positive atmosphere. This study had the potential to enhance the application of heads' leadership styles in the education sectors by encouraging an effective administrative culture. The

study would advance our understanding of the importance of supporting the educational environment and addressing students' needs to cram for the best possible results.

Delimitation of the Study

- 1. The study was delimited to female school teachers of three southern districts (Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Karak).
- 2. It was further delimited to the heads' directive leadership style. School environment was delimited to dimension of physical aspect.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This part focuses on reviewing existing literature regarding the impact of heads' leadership styles on school environment. The review aims to understand how leadership style including directive, influences key dimension of school environment, such as physical environment.

Importance of Heads' Leadership Styles

Heads of educational institutions across Pakistan who employs a directive approach—provides clear instructions, goals, and structured processes—has been linked to a noticeable improvement in teachers' performance, particularly in lesson planning, classroom management, and discipline

(Akhtar, 2024) conducted a study at public degree colleges in Lahore, when role ambiguity is properly managed, directive leadership is associated with increased job satisfaction. Although this approach fits in nicely with Pakistani hierarchical norms, international research warns that an over-reliance on directive behavior may stifle teachers' creativity and autonomy.

The educational environment becomes more resilient and positive in environments where leaders also exhibit supportive behaviors like empathy, encouragement, and concern for the well-being of staff members. According to research conducted in Pakistan, teachers report higher levels of motivation and general job satisfaction when school administrators combine emotional support with firm guidance. Similar patterns have been seen in Nigeria and Indonesia, where caring and attentive leaders increase teacher commitment and resilience, thereby improving the efficacy of education.

According to the Path-Goal Theory, leaders must modify their approach based on the tasks at hand and the traits of their followers. The theory was empirically validated in the educational setting of Pakistan, where teamwork behavior through a directive, participative, supportive and achievement-oriented leadership style can enhance the performance of organizations, provided that it is adjusted to the specific conditions of a particular country (Cumar et al.2025). Likewise, in the case of Kenyan manufacturing companies and SMEs, it has been shown that, when adapted

to the local conditions, directive and achievement-oriented leadership can enhance the performance of the organization. (Cumar et al. 2025).

Importance of School Environment

Students' health and focus are significantly impacted by the physical state of school buildings. According to recent studies, schools with adequate ventilation, lighting, and upkeep have lower absenteeism and illness rates. On the other hand, respiratory issues and a decline in cognitive function have been connected to deteriorating facilities and poor air quality (Cassells & Ferguson, 2013). Furthermore, adding green areas to schoolyards promotes unstructured play and physical activity, both of which have been demonstrated to improve behavior, memory, attention, academic performance, and general health outcomes.

The foundation of a student's sense of belonging and inclusion in this physical setting is the school environment, especially the caliber of interactions between students and between students and teachers. In addition to lowering the risk of anxiety, depression, absenteeism, and risky behaviors, a strong sense of belonging at school has been repeatedly linked to increased academic engagement, better emotional stability, and greater life satisfaction. Additionally, how students are seated in the classroom can have a subtle effect on their physiological receptivity and level of engagement during class, which encourages group projects and participation.

Directive Leadership Style and Physical Environment

Vroom and Jago (2007), states that directive leadership is a leadership style in which the leader provides subordinates with precise, detailed, and unambiguous instructions, establishing a methodical framework for completing tasks. The tangible elements of the classroom, including the furniture, lighting, noise levels, seating configurations, and general design, are referred to as the physical learning environment in the context of education.

Directive leadership in schools implies that teachers or administrators make decisions about classroom design and maintenance, and this can impact the physical environment. Studies have indicated that teachers give a student a higher opportunity of succeeding in learning. Guidelines on classroom contents tend to create more organized and education friendly settings (Buchanan et al., 2012). A systematic sitting dedicated to group work, these leaders often ensure that the classroom is prepared in such a way that it minimizes distraction and maximizes student attention, which improves learning environment.

Also, directive leaders often provide specific classroom instructions and management, ensuring the efficient operation through the facilitation of the physical environment of learning activities. Students tend to make good use of the resources. and physical environment as they know what

they are supposed to do and how they are supposed to interact (Raelin, 2016). This is an understanding that physical layout to work more efficiently with the space and resources available to it enhances the classroom learning outcomes. How leaders address issues such as classroom safety, cleanliness and accessibility is also indicative of the impact of directive leadership on the physical learning environment. Directive leaders often proactively clean the space, which will be able to enhance the comfort and concentration of students (Zepke, 2014). Students perform better study more easily and have fewer physical distractions to worry about in a place that is well maintained and neat.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part comprises of research design, population, sample, data collection tools, its validation and techniques, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

The researcher used descriptive survey design to investigate the impact of leadership style on school environment at secondary level in southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The survey design deals with numerical data in a systematic way and statistical analysis, finding relationships and forms of a large population (Creswell, 2014). Various head's leadership styles includes directive, supportive, style had been evaluated to determine their impact on the dimensions of school environment..

Population

Population refers to all individuals take part in a study. All the female teachers teaching at secondary school level of Southern districts (Bannu, Karak and Laki Marwat) constituted the population o the study. There were total 45 girls high schools where 590 teachers were teaching in district Bannu, as well as, there were total 29 girls high schools, where 470 teacher teaching district Karak and there were 28 girls high schools, where 452 teachers were teaching in district Lakki Marwat. Keeping in view this calculation there were total 102 girls high schools in which 1512 female teachers were teaching. The population size of the present study is shown in the following table:

Table No. 1 Population Size

Districts	Number of Girls	Public Total Female		
	Secondary Schools	Teachers		
Bannu	45	590		
Karak	29	470		
Lakki	28	452		
Marwat				
Total	159	1512		

Source (ASCR 2021-2022).

Sampling Technique

Gill et al (2009), argues that suitable plan of sampling is crucial for validity and precision of the study. The researcher used stratified sampling method that ensured equal representation of each of the districts. Gill et al (2009), was followed by the researcher at the time of choosing the sample of the study.

Sample of the Study

The study's sample was consisted of 307 female teachers at secondary school level from the three districts (Bannu (120), Karak (96), and Lakki Marwat (91)) of southern areas. The sample distribution from a total population of 1,512 female teachers was calculated using the formula below:

The formula in text form is:

 $n i=(Ni/N) \times ni$

Where:

- ni = sample size for each district,
- Ni = number of female teachers in the district,
- N = total population,
- n = total sample size.

The following table illustrates the above description of sample size.

Table No. 3.2 Sample Size

District	Total	Female	Sample	Size	(Proportional
	Teachers		Allocatio	n)	
Bannu	590)		120)
Karak	470 96				
Lakki	452	2	91		
Marwat					
Total	151	2		307	7

Gill et al. (2009)

Data Collection Tools

The research developed two data collection tools (Leadership Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) and School Environment Questionnaire (SEQ) to collect data from the respondents. In order to answer the first research question, "What different leadership styles are practiced as perceived by female teachers at secondary school level?" leadership styles facet was added, as directive leadership facet was consisted of nine statements, To answer the second research question, "What is the status of selected dimension of school environment at secondary level? School environment facet was included comprising of nine statements, The purpose of the leadership styles questionnaire was to evaluate the leadership styles of the head while school environment questionnaire was used to assess the

selected dimensions of school environment. For both of the questionnaires a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree) was attached to each statement to indicate its appropriateness for the study.

Validity

In order to check the validity of the data collection tools the researcher commenced the process of validation. The researcher checked content validity of both tools through eight university experts and professors.. The experts and professors evaluated all the facets and statements' clarity supporting leadership styles and school environment. Structurally our statements were refined and two irrelevant statements were removed from leadership styles questionnaire, while two statements were refined and one inappropriate statement was removed from school environment questionnaire. The rest of the statements were found relevant and approved and kept unchanged. Finally leadership styles questionnaire was completed with 7 statements and school environment questionnaire was contained 7 statements and total 14 statements were finalized in both of the research instruments. All the statements had clear glimpse of the essential factors of leadership styles and various dimensions of school environment. So the tools were channelized by approving content validity to confirm that both of the tools were appropriate for data collection purposes

Reliability

The research instruments were scrutinized for the purpose of reliability. The researcher conducted a pilot study of 31 sampled female teachers at secondary level. Cronbach's Alpha value regarding leadership styles questionnaire was found 0.82, showing a sound internal consistency level. School environment questionnaire (SEQ) achieved Cronbach's Alpha value 0.78.

Pilot Testing

The main purpose of the pilot testing was to find out any kind of weaknesses in the data collection instrument. In this process leadership styles questionnaire and school environment questionnaire along with their scale were used. The data was analyzed in which most of the statements were improved while some other were skipped. After completing this phase the research was confident to take prudent start on the collection of data.

Data Collection Technique

Participants in this study were female teachers employed in public schools, and data was collected through field surveys using self-developed instruments called the Leadership Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) and School environment Questionnaire (LEQ). To ensure accurate and thorough data collection, the researcher personally visited the chosen schools, talked with teachers, explained the purpose of the study, and handed out the

questionnaires, giving each female teacher a copy of the LSQ and LEQ to mark (\checkmark) their responses. This ensured that the necessary data was collected in a structured way.

Research Ethics

The supervisor provided the researcher with a duly signed facilitation letter, which was handed over to the heads of the chosen schools and asked for their assistance in supplying pertinent information regarding the impact of female heads' leadership style on the school environment. The teacher taking part in the data collection process also signed a Consent Form, which was prepared by the researcher. After that, the researcher gave each respondent the assurance that the information would only be utilized for research and that no attempt would be made to hurt any teachers or disturb the classroom environment. Throughout the data collection process he research followed research ethics.

Data Analysis

Two primary areas, including leadership styles and school environment, were examined using the Leadership Styles Questionnaire and School Environment Questionnaire, in which used a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree with a score 1 and Strongly Agree with a score 5). To achieve objectives No. 1 and No. 2 Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviations was used, while inferential statistics such as linear regression was used to achieve objective No.3.

Table 3: Scale and Range used for LSQ and LEQ

Weight	Scale	Mean Range
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00-1.80
2	Disagree	1.81-2.60
3	Undecided	2.61-3.40
4	Agree	3.41-4.20
5	Strongly Agree	4.21-5.00

Source (Rensis Likert (1932)

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This portion focuses on the analysis, tabulation, and interpretation of the collected data. The analyzed data was systematically tabulated and interpreted in accordance with the study's research questions.

The study addressed the following research questions;

Research Question 1: What different leadership styles are practiced as perceived by female teachers at secondary school level?

Table 3 Rank Order of Directive Leadership Style

S.NO	Statement	M	SD			
Our School Head:						
1	emphasizes setting objectives, by providing	4.00	1.25			
	necessary supervision					
2	makes independent decisions.	4.00	1.25			
3	allows teachers to report on what needs to be	3.96	1.12			
	done and how it should be done					
4	ensures that teachers comprehend what is	3.75	1.15			
	expected of them.					
5	instructs team members to follow pre-decided	3.74	1.15			
	methods of teaching.					
6	advises teachers to follow the rules and	3.74	1.15			
	regulations strictly					
7	holds meetings with teachers regarding students'	3.05	0.87			
	learning outcomes					
	Overall	3.75	0.70			

The above table demonstrates that the statement "Our school head emphasizes setting objectives by providing necessary supervision" has a mean score (M=4.00) and respective SD=1.25), which falls in the "agree" (A) category (3.41–4.20). This indicates that the school head is generally perceived as providing clear objectives and ensuring adequate supervision for teachers. The statement "Our school head makes independent decisions." has a mean score (M=4.00) and respective standard deviation (SD=1.25), placing it in the category (3.41-4.20) "agree". Mean score (M=3.96) and respective standard deviation (SD=1.12) regarding the statement that our schools heads allows teachers to report on what needs to be done and how it should be done, falls in the rang/category a(3.41-4.20) "agree". The statement "Our school head ensures that teachers comprehend what is expected of them" with mean score (M=3.75) and respective standard deviation (SD=1.15) falls in the range/category (3.41-4.20) "agree". In the same way mean score (M=3.74) and respective standard deviation (SD=1.15) of the statement "school head counsels the instructors to follow rules" falls in the range /category (3.41-4.20) agree. The statement "Our school head holds meetings with teachers regarding students' learning outcomes." received a mean score (M=3.05) and respective standard deviation (SD=0.87) falls in the category undecided. The overall mean score (M=3.75) and respective standard deviation (SD=0.70) falls within the "agree" category (3.41-4.20), suggesting that the school head is generally perceived as having a directive leadership style, ensuring structured guidance, adherence to rules, and decision-making authority.

Table 4: Rank Order of Availability of Physical Environment

S.NO	Statement	M	SD
Our Sc			
1	provides separate and well-furnished spaces for arts, music, and sports activities.	4.07	1.54
2	ensures that emergency exits are visible and unobstructed.	4.05	1.06
3	ensures that functional drinking water stations are available for hydration.	4.00	1.25
4	maintains outdoor areas for recreation to support physical activity and relaxation.	4.00	1.25
5	provides well-ventilated spaces that benefit from natural light to enhance wellness.	3.98	1.90
6	offers spacious classrooms with sufficient seating for every student.	3.11	1.41
7	incorporates secure fencing around the school grounds for safety.	2.94	0.96
8	guarantees clean and well-kept restrooms for comfort and hygiene.	2.68	1.24
	Overall	3.55	0.71

Table No. 4 shows that the statement "Our school environment provides separate and well-furnished spaces for arts, music, and sports activities." has a mean score (M=4.07) and respective standard deviation (SD=1.54), which falls in the category $(3.41-4.\overline{20})$ "agree" (. The statement "Our school environment ensures that emergency exits are visible and unobstructed." has a mean score (M=4.05) and respective standard deviation (SD=1.06), also falls in the category (3.41-4.20) "agree". "Our school environment ensures that functional drinking water stations are available for hydration." Bearing mean score (M=4.00) and respective standard deviation SD=(1.25) falls in the range (3.41-4.20) agree. Mean score (M=4.00) and respective standard deviation SD=(1.25) regarding the statement "school environment maintain out door areas for supporting physical activities' falls in the range (3.41-4.20) agree. The statement regarding "our school environment provides well-ventilated spaces that benefit from natural light to enhance wellness" bearing mean score (M=3.98) and respective standard deviation SD=(1.90.) falls in the range (3.41-4.20) agree. Mean score (M=3.11) and respective standard deviation SD= (1.41) o the statement "offers spacious classrooms with sufficient seating for every student" falls in the range (2.61-3.40) undecided. The statement incorporates secure fencing around the school grounds for safety incorporates secure fencing around the school grounds for safety" with mean score (M=2.94) and respective standard

deviation SD=(0.96) falls in the range (2.61-3.40) undecided Moreover the final statement "our school environment guarantees clean and well-kept restrooms for comfort and hygiene" falls in the range (2.61-3.40) undecided. The overall mean score (M=3.55) and respective standard deviation SD=(0.71) falls in the range (3.41-4.20) agree showing that satisfactory physical environment was organized.

 H_o : There is no significant impact of different leadership styles on the existed school environment at secondary level.

Table No. 5 (a) Model Summary of Regression

Model	R	\mathbb{R}^2	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate	f	Sig
1	0.758a	0.575	0.573	3.58303	412.161	0.000

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership Styles
- b. Dependant variable: Physical Environment

The above table indicates that the R Square value of 0.573 signifies the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (Physical Environment) that can be attributed to the independent variable (Leadership Styles). This means that LDRS accounts for 57.3% of the variation in SE, demonstrating a moderate to strong relationship between leadership styles and the school environment. The p-value (0.000) is below the standard significance level of 0.05, indicating that the predictor of leadership styles (LS) has a meaningful influence on the physical environment. This suggests a strong association between changes in leadership styles and variations in physical environment.

Table No. 5 (b) Coefficients of Regression

	Standardized Coefficients			
Model		β	t	Sig.
_	(Constant)		-0.005	□ .996
1	Leadership styles	0.758	20.302	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Physical Environment

The coefficient table shows that if a unit change takes place in the independent variable (Leadership Styles), which is 0.758, change will take place in the dependent variable (Physical Environment), as the β value is 0.758.

FINDINGS

The following findings were drawn from the study:

It was found that school heads ensures teachers' supervision, structured guidance, adherence to rules, and decision-making authority. However, respondents were uncertain about heads' meetings with teachers regarding students' learning outcomes

It was found that in context of physical environment, respondents noted the availability of designated spaces for arts, music, and sports, along with emergency exits and drinking water stations. However, differing opinions emerged regarding classroom space, fencing, and restroom conditions, indicating aspects that might require further consideration.

It was indicated that fluctuations in leadership styles resulted in corresponding modifications to the school environment, confirming the significant role leadership plays in shaping school conditions. Respondents viewed that leadership styles have sound effect on social and emotional environment,

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study regarding practicing directive leadership style, indicated by organized supervision, objectives formation and decision making, align with Nwokocha et al. (2015), arguing that administrative control and proficiency is promoted by directive leadership style.

The study indicated that physical environment in form of art corner/rooms, sports activities, facility regarding drinking water and emergency exits were existed, aligned to the study conducted by Barret et al. (2019), in which it was reported that well-furnished learning environment leads to learners' involvement and their learning achievements.

Respondents viewed that leadership styles have sound impact on social and emotional environment, while it was found that there was less/moderate relationship between these styles regarding physical and psychological environment. However Smith & Brown, (2023) asserted that leadership styles have directly leadership styles have a direct influence on physical, and social, dimensions of school environment.

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that ingredients of directive leadership style were observed, but organizational discipline and teachers' autonomy may further strengthens effective teamwork. Resolving these challenges may provide safe environment for teachers and head so that they may achieve organizational commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were the recommendations of the study

- School leaders may adopt a well-rounded leadership approach by incorporating directive methods to promote a more inclusive decision-making environment.
- The school head may restore restroom for teacher so that teachers may relieve there in vacant periods.
- The school head may ensure proper fencing, so that students and teachers may feel secure and safe

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