



A Comparative Analysis of Head Teachers' Management for Academic Problems in Secondary Education Landscape

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Abstract

The leadership and knowledge that head teachers offer their mentees make them great role models. Furthermore, it is recognized that upon taking up their positions as school principals in Pakistan, head teachers face a multitude of educational and instructional obstacles. These are the insufficient space in classroom, overcrowded classrooms, psychological problems related to the gap between ideals and reality, ineffective policies, lack of professional skills and training, lack of subject matter knowledge, and discipline issues are all highlighted in this study. This research delves into the management problems faced by secondary school principals. The study's sample population included heads of both public and private universities. Sialkot district was the centers of attention for this research. Using a self-structured questionnaire, 96 instructors, including both males and females, provided the data. The researchers applied a multi-stage sampling technique for the selection of the sample. The teachers were unhappy with their professional development. The study found that research can help identify the true challenges faced by head teachers and offer practical solutions that would support their professional growth and classroom impact.

Keywords:

Comparative Analysis, Head Teachers, Management, Academic Problems, Secondary School Education.

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Introduction

There is an ever-present barrage of academic issues that pose serious threats to the effectiveness of secondary education around the world. Achieving educational fairness and excellence is hindered by these difficulties, which include key literacy/numeracy gaps, low student engagement, and inadequate curriculum delivery (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Strategic management, instructional leadership and positive transformation are the responsibilities of the head teacher in such a prevailing complex context (Leithwood et al., 2020). Their ability to identify, assess, and address academic concerns is crucial to the success of their school. Though leadership's significance has been extensively studied, there is a lack of detailed, comparative empirical work that dissects the ways in which principals in different school settings identify academic issues and, more crucially, the effectiveness of the different management strategies they use to address these issues (Day et al., 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 2018).

When trying to make sense of leadership behaviours through the lens of contextual mediation, this knowledge gap stands out. Ärlestig and Törnsten (2022) note that the existing literature on effective leadership often gives general models without giving enough thought to how socioeconomic disparities, the availability of resources, and institutional culture influence head teachers' perceptions of academic issues and the available strategic options.

There is a lack of comparative analysis that shed light on the contextual dependencies that can explain why a management style that works in a city school with plenty of resources might not work at all in a rural school with little monetary resources (Khalifa et al., 2019). Therefore, research focusing on academic problem solving that goes beyond prescriptive leadership frameworks is urgently needed. The current literature on effective leadership frequently provides broad models, according to Ärlestig and Törnsten (2022), but fails to adequately consider the ways in which socioeconomic differences, resource availability and institutional culture impact head teachers' views of academic challenges and available strategies.

The major objective of this study is to compare and contrast the management tactics used by secondary school principals to deal with common academic issues. Harris and Jones (2019) state that school funding, student demographic composition, and institutional history are essential factors that make effect on the nature of academic challenges and the strategic responses elicited from school leaders. This study aims to move beyond such monolithic descriptions of leadership. The search is taking a comparative approach in order to gain a more nuanced and contextual knowledge of factual leadership practices. This means that we want to know not just what techniques are used, but also one specific approaches are prioritized and how effective they are regarded to be. In the end, this search hopes to provide policy makers, school administrators, and other educational stakeholders with the context sensitive framework of management methods that they may use to address academic issues in their own institutions.

The current research aims to accomplish its purpose by capturing variations in challenges related to student achievement, engagement, and curriculum implementation; first, to identify and compare the most prevalent and pressing academic problems across a diverse sample of secondary schools. The second part of the research will look at different principles deal with

student performance by comparing and contrasting the most common management solutions. This will be based on principles' leadership philosophies, the resources at their disposal, and the specifics of their school. Third, it will evaluate the effects and perceived efficacy of various techniques for allocating resources (time, money, human capital, and instructional materials) in order to address ongoing problems with curriculum delivery. This search will provide practical insights for improving secondary education results by methodically pursuing these aims, which will build a complete and comparative understanding of academic problem management at the school leadership level.

The study's objectives are as follows;

1. To assess and compare secondary school teachers' perceptions regarding the efficacy of external administrative guidance and decentralized budgetary systems.
2. To investigate gender-based differences in head teachers' perceived autonomy regarding instructional decision-making, policy implementation, and institutional conflict resolution.
3. To determine the extent to which external monitoring mechanisms (MEAs) and internal supervisory frameworks predict perceived oversight efficiency and systemic educational harmony.

Review of Related Literature

In 21st century, secondary education has become difficult due to rapid technological innovations, rising societal demands and global focus on educational accountability and outcomes (Fullan, 2014). Headteachers also known as principal or school leaders have changed in this changing setting. The modern headteacher is the instructional leader, the architect of the schools academic climate, and the key player in navigating and resolving academic issues. No longer limited to administrative and discipline duties. How well a head teacher finds, analyse and manages these academic difficulties affect our schools performance and student achievement. The purpose of this literature review is to synthesise the current studies on the topic of academic challenges and how secondary school heads manage them. Academic concerns include low student accomplishment, high core subject failure rates, poor curriculum implementation, inappropriate teaching methods, and students disengagement (Hattie, 2012; Marzano et al., 2018). Innovative leadership, strategic decision-making, and resource mobilization are needed to address these difficulties. This review examined educational leadership theory, secondary education academic issues and comparative factors that affect these practice across context.

This literature review compares research critically. Leadership reactions to academic adversity are examined for similarities, differences and best practices. This review highlights the universal principles and context-specific tactics of effective academic problem management by reviewing studies from various educational systems and circumstances. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to increase leadership efficacy and secondary school education must conduct this core examination. Thematic parts discuss key aspects of the head teacher's job in academic management. Head teachers use educational leadership theories to solve academic issues. Leaders analyze difficulties and respond using these theories. The

influential paradigm of instructional leadership, which gained traction in the 1980s, is still extremely relevant today. According to Hallinger (2011), instructional leadership includes making sure the school has a clear goal, managing the curriculum, and creating a positive atmosphere for learning. This model addresses academic underperformance by placing the head teacher in charge of setting academic goals, overseeing and evaluating teaching, organizing the curriculum, and protecting instructional time.

However, transformational leadership theory, heavily influenced by Burns (1978) and later adapted to education by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), encourages personnel to work toward group goals beyond their own. Transformational leaders address academic issues by creating a shared vision, giving individualized support, supporting new ideas and approaches, and setting high performance standards. Empowering department heads and skilled teachers is essential for school improvement in secondary schools (Leithwood, et al., 2020). It solves academic issues by strengthening faculty capacity and dedication not only by mediating. The idea of leadership as a single person is challenged by distributed or shared leadership (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2013). Leadership practice extends to the school social and situational milieu, says this notion. Headteacher may delegate leadership to literacy coordinators, department heads and lead teachers to address complicated academic issues like low literacy rate. This paradigm encourages communal accountability and uses varied skill sets to solve complicated academic problems better than a top down approach, making it crucial in large country schools with complex architecture.

Lately, adaptive leadership has become essential for negotiating the volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) nature of modern education. Adaptive leadership distinguishes between technical difficulties that the specialists can handle and adaptive obstacles that demand attitude, belief, and behavior changes. Adapting to a situation like systemic student disengagement may require the head teacher to organize organizational learning rather than just executing a program. This theoretical lens is essential for understanding how the best head teachers diagnose academic issues before choosing an intervention plan. Poor curriculum implementation and pedagogical stagnation contribute to low accomplishment. In many secondary schools, the written curriculum differs from the taught curriculum (Priestley & Philippou, 2018). Teachers who struggle to integrate technology, encourage critical thinking, or apply inclusive education techniques have academic issues. Persistent absenteeism and student disengagement are two more academic concerns with major consequences. In a 2019 study, Fredricks et al. Cognitive disengagement refers to shallow learning, emotional disengagement to acts of disruption, and behavioral disengagement to feelings of not belonging. Because of the complexity of the social situations and the prevalence of abstract concepts in secondary school, students are more prone to become disinterested in their studies. Dropout and academic failure start with disengagement. To manage school atmosphere, student well-being, and relevant and meaningful learning experiences that drive adolescents, head teachers must look beyond basic instruction.

Finally, teacher quality and capacity are major academic issues. The biggest element affecting student achievement in school is teaching quality (Hattie, 2012; OECD, 2018). Academic issues are linked to teacher burnout, excessive staff turnover in challenging schools, limited

pedagogical content understanding, and poor professional development. A head teacher must address staff professional growth and well-being while meeting student academic needs. This includes facilitating collaborative planning, strong and supportive teacher assessment, and a professional learning community where instructors may solve instructional issues.

Head teachers employ a range of ways to solve the academic challenges mentioned above. Effective management work on the basis of the data-driven decision-making approach. Schildkamp et al. (2017) and Mandinach & Schildkamp (2021) state that modern school administrators are obligated to examine the data sets such as the standard test scores, graduation pass frequency, results of formative assessments, and student attendance trends. This calls for in-depth diagnostic investigation, critical questioning about underlying reasons, and curricular adjustments—not merely data collection. A head teacher may utilize disaggregated data to identify a maths-struggling subgroup to better target interventions.

Accordingly, school administrators should push for pedagogical practices supported by research, such as personalized lessons, group work, and formative evaluation (Tomlinson, 2017; Wiliam, 2018). The head teacher must be a learner, stay current on educational research, allow teachers to experiment and learn new methods, and create a psychologically safe environment where innovation is encouraged and failures are seen as learning opportunities. A multitude of comparative criteria that vary among geographies and school contexts impact head teachers' tactics. Socioeconomic background is the biggest difference. Head teachers in high-poverty schools often juggle academic issues, student hunger, trauma, and household resources (Sirin, 2019). Thus, they must engage with social services, establish wraparound programs, and address non-academic learning hurdles outside of school. In contrast, well-off leaders may focus on academic pressure or enhancing the curriculum for high achievers.

The comparative framework of national and local policy contexts rules and limits head teachers. Head teachers prioritize and handle academic concerns in response to high-stakes testing and school inspection frameworks, such as Ofsted in England or various state-level systems in the U.S. (Lingard & Lewis, 2016). Executives at accountability-driven companies may feel pressured to put exam preparation and short-term goals at the top of their list of priorities. On the other hand, principals may have greater leeway to experiment with new approaches to teaching and distributing school funds under more decentralized systems like the American charter school movement or the English academy model (OECD, 2018). Other important comparison factors are school size and culture. A tiny rural secondary school head teacher may personally, hands-on, lead by getting to know every teacher and student. In a major urban comprehensive school, the same leader must work through deputy heads, department chairpersons, and instructional coaches (Harris, 2013). A new head teacher's strategy for managing academic problems is also influenced by the school's culture, which can be collaborative or isolated (Fullan, 2014). Changing deep-rooted cultural norms takes time and nuance.

A major gap in the literature is the direct comparison of these management approaches across different secondary school landscapes. While many studies examine leadership within a single country, system, or type of school (e.g., high-poverty urban schools), few compare headteacher

strategies cross different national education systems, resource levels, or policy environments (Burns and Fogelgarn, 2022). This divide makes it hard to separate context-dependent problem solving principals from universal once. headteacher focus on their activities and immediate results not the longevity of the academic changes they make. It is unclear how management techniques change, how effective initiative are institutionalized beyond a leaders' term, and how headteacher constructs school resilience to survive future academic shocks (Harris and Jones, 2018). Effective leadership development programs must consider the long term effects of management styles.

Methods and Procedures

The basic motive of the current research is to attain better understanding of the difficulties faced by headteaches of secondary schools in managing their schools resources in order to provide students with the high quality education despite budget cuts. A quantitative strategy was carefully chosen to tackle the objectives of the study. The study objectives can be directly addressed by this design which is ideal for collecting numerical data from the sample in a systematic manner. The population of the study comprised the heads of secondary school teachers in district of Sialkot. In order to conduct a reliable comparison, the research population was precisely characterized. From 96 schools in the Sialkot district; 48 in rural areas and 48 in urban centres, this group of 96 male and female secondary school heads was assembled. The use of a stratified sampling technique helped that the sample accurately reflected the public and private sectors' variety in terms of both geography and institutional makeup. This approach used to gather data ensured that heads of secondary school would make future comparison between these groups more reliable.

The research instrument for data collection was questionnaire that was prepared to measure on the basis of 5 point likert scale. The researchers selected the questionnaire as research tool because of how well it measure principal's views, beliefs and experiences related to academic management issues. To keep the self reporting process honest, explain any confusion, and guarantee high response rate, the questionnaires were physically handed over to each headteacher separately. Standardized and comparable data from all participants could only be obtained by this way of encouraging self-controlled reporting. The data was subjected to a thorough quantitative analysis cycle after gathering phase in order to fulfill the study's requirements. The researchers used the software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to do complex calculations on all the collected data. This analysis used descriptive statistics to break down the complicated dataset into more manageable sections. The statistic techniques included frequency, percentage, and measures of central tendency (mean score), and also the inferential statistics.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

On the basis of the primary data the following analysis is presented and interpreted;

Table 1

The authorities i.e. EDOs and DEOs provide guidance in your financial and administrative matters.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t-test
1	Male	7	22	0	14	3	3.35	1.25	-2.49
	Female	19	22	0	4	4	3.98	1.21	

Table 1 refers the difference of male and female teachers as the mean score (3.35) of male teachers is less than the mean score (3.98) of female teachers which is clear indication about female teachers inclinations of agree behaviour toward the statement. Calculated (-2.49) is less than tabulated (0.014). Thus, male and female instructors agree that EDOs and DEOs advise them on school administration and finances. Most female teachers agree.

Table 2

Development of school budget under new budgetry system.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t-test
2	Male	13	18	0	14	1	3.60	1.256	-1.39
	Female	14	27	1	5	2	3.93	1.048	

In Table 2, male teachers' mean score (3.60) is lower than female teachers (3.93), indicating that most female instructors agree with the statement. Calculated (-1.39) exceeds tabulated (0.167). This concluded that the male and female teachers are agree that new budgetry system simplify the school budget planning. Most female teachers feel that the new approach makes school readiness a stage in development that provides a simple outline.

Table 3

Better overseeing of educational activities at organizational level.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t-test
3	Male	1	8	3	24	10	3.83	1.018	-0.34
	Female	0	5	0	27	17	3.899	1.00	

In Table 3, male teachers' mean score (3.83) is lower than female teachers (3.89), indicating that most female instructors agreed that new system improved the overall organizational insight. The calculated value (-0.34) is less than the reported value (0.72). Thus, instructors of

both genders agree that the new approach has improved organization-level education oversight. Most female teachers feel that the new structure has improved organization-level education oversight.

Table 4

Independence in decision-making for the improvement of instructions.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t- test
4	Male	10	24	3	8	1	3.74	1.062	-2.03
	Female	17	27	0	5	0	4.137	0.86	

In Table 4, male teachers' mean score (3.74) is lower than female teachers (4.13), indicating that most female instructors agree with the statement. Calculated (-2.03) is less than tabulated (4.49). It is noted that there is no statistical significant difference between gender disparity that you are freer to make coaching development decisions at your institute. Most female teachers feel that they have more freedom to develop coaching in their institute.

Table 5

Better implementation of rules and regulations at school level.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t- test
5	Male	17	25	0	5	0	4.15	0.89	0.26
	Female	17	26	0	6	0	4.09	0.91	

Table 5 reveals that male teachers' mean score (4.15) is higher than female teachers' (4.09), indicating that most female instructors agree with the statement. Calculated (0.26) exceeds tabulated (0.78). It is informed through results that there is no statistical significant results in genders' comments that you are freer to make school rules and regulations. Most male teachers feel that they can better enforce school rules.

Table 6

Better position for the solution of staff problems at school level.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t-test
6	Male	20	20	0	6	0	4.16	0.973	0.47
	Female	16	27	0	6	0	4.08	0.90	

In Table 6, male teachers' mean score (4.16) is higher than female teachers (4.08), indicating that most female instructors agree with the statement. Calculated (0.47) is less than tabulated (0.63). Thus, both the gender, male and female instructors responded same that you are now

better able to solve your staff's institutional challenges. Most male teachers agree that you can now address institutional staff issues.

Table 7

More time for supervision at school.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t- test
7	Male	20	22	0	4	0	4.25	0.85	1.597
	Female	13	28	3	3	2	3.96	0.97	

In Table 7, male teachers' mean score (4.25) is higher than female teachers' (3.96), indicating that most female instructors agree with the statement. The estimated (1.597) value exceeds the tabulated (-1.14). Thus, statistical difference between both gender (male and female) teachers' responses indicate that you have more time to supervise your school staff. Most male teachers feel that they have more time to supervise their school workers.

Table 8

Satisfaction on the visit of MEAs at your school.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t- test
8	Male	15	24	0	4	3	3.96	1.13	-1.83
	Female	18	30	0	0	1	4.29	0.68	

Table 8 reveals that most female teachers agree with the statement, since their mean score (4.29) is higher than their mean score (3.96). Calculated (-1.83) is smaller than tabulated (7.00). It is informed through the results that there is no statistical significant difference in both gender (male and female) of teachers who say MEA school visits are satisfactory. Most female teachers feel that MEA school visits are satisfactory.

Table 9

Stakeholders liaison through frequent meeting sessions.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t- test
9	Male	24	21	0	1	0	4.48	0.623	0.39
	Female	23	25	0	1	0	4.42	0.61	

In Table 9, male teachers' mean score (4.48) is higher than female teachers' (4.42), indicating that most female instructors agree that the stakeholders liaison would be strengthen through frequent meetings at school level. The calculated (0.39) is smaller than the tabulated (0.69). Thus, the Head-Teacher-Student interface can best achieve no significant gender difference in

teacher answers through regular meetings. Most male instructors feel that the connect among stakeholders (e.g. headteacher, teacher, and students) is best achieved through regular meetings.

Table 10

Care of the benefits of the trainers and trainees.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t-test
10	Male	22	22	0	2	0	4.38	0.71	0.35
	Female	17	32	0	0	0	4.34	0.48	

Table 10 reveals that most female instructors agree with the statement because their mean score (4.34) is higher than their male teachers (4.38). Calculated (0.35 - tabulated 0.72), less. It is noted that school heads feel that there is no significant difference in the both gender (male and female) of teachers' replies to the trainer's benefits to trainees. Therefore, most male teachers feel that School Heads assist trainers and trainees.

Table 11

Implementation of policies for improment in academic results.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t. test
11	Male	16	23	2	5	0	4.08	0.91	-2.27
	Female	24	24	0	1	0	4.45	0.61	

Table 11 reveals that most female instructors agree with the statement, as indicated by their mean score (4.45) versus 4.08 for male teachers. Calculated (-2.27) is smaller than tabulated (2.50). It is informed through results that there is no statistical significant difference in both gender (male and female) of teachers' views that rigorous student-teacher policies improve educational achievements. Most female teachers feel that stringent student-teacher policies promote educational results.

Table 12

Academic efforts and community behaviour for school improvement.

S. No.	Gender	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	Mean Score	SD	t. test
12	Male	19	27	0	0	0	4.41	-498	-1.143
	Female	26	23	0	0	0	4.53	-504	

Table 12 reveals that most female instructors agree with the statement, as indicated by their mean score (4.53) versus 4.41 for male teachers. Calculated (-1.143) is smaller than tabulated (0.25). Thus, instructors' comments that instructional effort balances school community behavior are similar across genders. Most female teachers feel that school community conduct balances instructional effort.

Findings and conclusion

The perspectives of male and female secondary school teachers on the management tactics employed by head teachers to resolve academic issues are thoroughly examined in this study. Consensus, subtle disagreement, and gendered views on administrative efficacy are all laid bare by the results of the statistical analysis of twelve critical areas of administration. Despite notable disparities in the depth of their agreement and in particular areas of school leadership, the research shows that male and female educators generally believe that modern management techniques are effective.

The results show that both sexes are in agreement on a number of key points of the new management system. Table 1 shows that teachers of both sexes agree that EDOs and DEOs give good advice on school administration and finances; Table 2 shows that the new system has made school budget planning easier; and Table 3 shows that the system has improved education oversight at the organizational level. This general agreement indicates that the majority of secondary school teachers view the systemic changes that have taken place as beneficial. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference in the following perceptions: (a) the ability to solve staff's institutional challenges (b) the satisfaction with Monitoring & Evaluation Assistant (MEA) school visits (c) the benefits imparted to trainers and trainees by school heads (d) the impact of strict student-teacher policies on educational achievements (e) and (d) the freedom to make decisions regarding coaching development (Table 4). This suggests that gender does not predict a significantly different perspective or experience for most of the operational and support roles of head teachers.

The findings of the study explored another important fact that on average, the female headteachers showed agree behavior more strongly with the statements about direction, assistance and structural frameworks as compared to the male headteachers did. It is also noted that there was a significant increase in the percentage of female instructors who have the view that new approaches streamlines planning perspectives, enhance supervision and offers autonomy in coaching growth and provide satisfaction in MEA visits. Female instructors may also show inclination to the agreed behaviours toward advising and systematic help and support as having a stronger component of the leadership influence. This is because it refers to the value of clear administrative protocols and structured guidance and support more highly in perspective of school management.

On contrary, it is a significant difference in the statistical results when it comes to autonomous leadership's basic elements; discretionary time, enforcement, and power. It is also expressed that male educators have a greater feeling of independence and competence. As shown in Table 5, they reported feeling more empowered to enforce school laws. In Table 6, they reported

feeling more confident in their abilities to solve staff difficulties at the institution. Most significantly, in Table 7, they reported having much more time to oversee school workers. In Table 7, there is a clear gender difference. This could mean that male and female head teachers view and manage their workload and operational efficiency differently, or that they have different experiences with and approaches to managing their time and authority. Furthermore, male educators were more likely to think that frequent meetings are the best way to facilitate the Head-Teacher-Student interface (Table 9), suggesting a potential gender bias in how members of the school community handle communication and relationship management.

The two main takeaways from this comparison are as follows. First, both male and female secondary school teachers have a positive impression of the updated management systems that have recently been implemented. They appreciate the system's ability to clarify, supervise, and help their colleagues. Reforms to improve and standardize administrative functions were successful, as this shows. Second, and most importantly, there is still a skewed view of managerial independence and power. Teachers' perceptions of their own agency and control in leadership positions are higher among males, but females are more likely to embrace supporting frameworks. There may be systemic advances in assessing the authority and efficacy experienced by head teachers of diverse genders within the same system, but intangible variables, such as deeply established institutional cultures, cultural expectations, or unconscious biases, may continue. As a result, in order for policies to be effective and egalitarian, future efforts will need to tackle these perceptual gaps on a deeper level than only structural ones. One way to promote gender equality in management is to provide leadership programs that help female principals assert their authority and make good use of their discretionary time.

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