



Effect of Gender on Principals' Leadership Behavior towards Teachers' Psychological Wellbeing and Pro-Organizational Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effect of gender on the principals' leadership behaviour towards teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-organizational motivation. Data were collected from 118 principals and vice principals of high and higher secondary schools Malakand division. A quantitative correlational approach was used to examine the perceptions of principals based on convenient sampling method. Three pre-validated scales were applied for data collection such as principal leadership scale, teachers' psychological wellbeing scale and pro-organizational motivation scale. All the three scales were pretested before data collection and were shown to subject experts for content validation. ANOVA statistics were utilised to understand the difference in the attitude of respondents towards principals' leadership behaviour, teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-organizational motivation. The findings showed that there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents towards principals' leadership behaviour, teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-organizational motivation based on gender. The findings of this study may be studied in other contexts for deeper understanding of the key role of gender as a mediator or moderator among the relationship between principals' leadership behaviour, teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-organizational motivation. This study suggested that others strong demographic factor such as experience, qualification and age may also be investigated interlink between school leadership and teacher motivation.



Introduction

Schools as modern learning organizations are increasingly becoming aware of retaining employees and promoting their wellbeing for the maintenance of competitive advantage. To do this, school

leaders remain at forefront (Tan et al., 2022). Leadership behaviour refers to the supervisory behaviour of organizational leaders to ensure employees development through providing them with knowledge, building their self-leadership skills and enabling them to show positive work behaviour. enhanced motivation and emotional association with the organization (Hayes & Derrington, 2023). Leaders' behaviour is a strong determining factor that deeply affects the level of motivation and psychological wellness among subordinates. According to leadership researchers, the behaviour of school leaders plays a key role in promoting and enhancing employee's wellbeing, satisfaction, work motivation and work behaviour of teachers and other school staff. In the present dynamic workplace, organizations are creating an enabling environment where employees are facilitated to maintain quality of work and competitiveness (Chen & Chen, 2024; Tobon et al., 2020). In such a workplace, the psychological wellbeing and pro-organizational motivation are highly imperative indicators of organizational success and higher productivity. The behaviour of school leaders is affected by different factors life qualification, experience and professional training (Atasoy, 2020). Studies have revealed that leaders with high qualification and rich experience provide better guidance to teachers and help them perform their duties more ardently than those who have less experience and professional qualification. There are mixed findings about the effect of gender of school leaders on teachers' development. Some studies have reported that female administrators provide better support being empathetic and kind towards their staff (Bush, 2021). However, most studies have favored male school leaders as being more supportive and helping towards their team (Bush et al., 2022; Hidayati & Sukriman, 2021)

In the current time, contemporary have been found to have changed their academic goals as being an organization where more inclusivity is supported. According to leadership researchers, schools as organizations are making endeavors to retain such employees who are professionally committed, qualified and emotionally more attached with their organizations (Subrakti & Aisyah, 2024). Other studies have revealed that more qualified and trained school administrators demonstrate high professional attitude towards their team members. Consequently, the school teachers who work under such school leadership show strong organizational commitment, efficiency and motivation in the workplace (Werang, 2023). Overcoming the increasing organizational challenges and developing positive relationship with their employees in the current work environment, organizations are promoting environment of trust, mutual understanding between the leaders and sub-ordinates by ensuring their job satisfaction and motivation (Purhasana, 2024).

Psychological Wellbeing

Leadership and employee's psychological wellbeing are essential variables to be considered in the workplace. Psychological wellbeing refers to experiencing a maximum feeling of pleasure and minimum demonstration of displeasure and undesirable feelings. Organizational productivity greatly depends on employees' feeling of fulfillment, pleasure and wellbeing (Li et al., 2024). Psychological wellbeing deals with feelings of employees and the feeling of the employees such as depression, dissatisfaction and so on. There is a close interlink between strong psychological wellbeing and employee happiness, health and commitment to work Improving the psychological wellbeing of employees makes positive contribution towards their personal development and organizational benefits such as happiness, satisfaction and better results (Li et al., 2025; Marsh et al., 2023).

Previous studies have reported a strong positive correlation between employee's psychological wellbeing and leaders' positive behaviour. These studies have further highlighted that such employees who possess higher wellbeing are more committed, show high resilience, and remain profitable. They remain optimistic and possess the ability to handle problems and issues more

effectively. Hence, psychological wellbeing has been declared as the significant predictor of high performance, positive motivation and personal satisfaction of employees. On the other hand, mentally disturbed employees have been found to demonstrate undesirable and aggressive behaviour in workplace which in turn leads to job stress, poor performance and turn out (Suleman et al., 2018).

Pro-organizational Motivation

Leadership behaviors exhibited by principals have a significant impact on the psychological well-being and job motivation of teachers. Pro-organizational motivation refers to the concept in which the member of an organization shows willingness and motivation to benefit the organization in terms of achieving its goals (Zhang et al., 2018). Pro-organizationally motivated employees show more commitment and dedication towards their organizational responsibilities and show better performance. They are ready to contribute towards the organizational success without any personal gains or interests (Wang & Li, 2019).

Studies have confirmed that promotion of empowerment and empowering leadership practices greatly enhances organizational productivity and motivation. It has been observed that when leaders create a stimulating work environment and culture of shared responsibility and performance, the workers feel empowered, cared and respected. This enhances their work commitment and motivation. This contributes towards the growing enthusiasm among the workers (Dahlan et al., 2025). Due to the fast-expanding work competitiveness in current workplace environment, different institutions are introducing basic structural innovations in place of old practices and approaches. Hence, the employees' wellbeing and pro-organizational motivation are considered important elements because it causes deeper effects on the overall organizational productivity Zhan & Liu, 2022).

Problem statement

Understanding how certain leadership behaviors, such as supportive communication, shared decision-making, and providing professional development opportunities, influence teachers' psychological well-being and organizational motivation is crucial. Although an extensive body of literature exists on leadership behaviour and employees wellbeing in industrial and higher education sectors about correlation of principals' leadership behaviour with psychological wellbeing and pro-organizational motivation of teachers in in the context of high schools.

Research Objectives

Following were the main objectives of this study:

1. To find out difference among high school principals regarding principals' leadership behaviour based on gender.
2. To find out difference among high school principals regarding teachers' psychological wellbeing based on gender.
3. To find out difference among high school principals regarding teachers' pro-organizational motivation based on gender.
4. To find difference among high school principals regarding the relationship between principals' leadership attitude towards teachers' psychological wellbeing and pro-organizational motivation.

Research Hypotheses

H₀¹: There is no difference among the respondents regarding principals' leadership behaviour based on gender.

H₀²: There is no difference among the respondents regarding teachers' psychological wellbeing based on gender

H₀³: There is no difference among the respondents regarding teachers' pro-organizational motivation based on gender

H₀⁴: There is no difference among principals' regarding the relationship among principals' leadership behaviour, teachers' psychological wellbeing and pro-organizational motivation based on gender.

Methodology

This study is based on quantitative correlational approach and is descriptive in nature. The study derives its roots from positivist paradigm which focuses on explanation and prediction in the relationship among research variables. Based on this paradigm, data was quantitatively collected and was analyzed using statistical techniques for verification of the stated hypotheses of the study.

Population

The population of this study consists of all principals and vice principals of government high and higher secondary schools in Malakand division. Malakand division is divided into different districts of Malakand division. However, the current study was conducted in the district Swat of Malakand division.

Sample

The sample of this research included all heads of secondary schools in district Swat. the sampling was done based on a population sampling technique. This sampling technique is used when the number of participants is less. The current study found it a useful approach to select all the principals of the high and higher secondary schools as sample. The principals participated in the study conveniently based on their personal willingness. A total of 118 participated in the study based on their consent.

Instrumentation

The researcher used three scales for data collection. To measure principals' leadership behaviour, the leadership empowering behaviour scale of Koncezak, Stelly and Trusty, (2000) was used. The scale consisted of 19 items and designed on seven-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale measures six-subdomains of leadership empowering behaviour. However, to use it in the current new context, the scale was piloted before using from data collection. To measure teachers' psychological wellbeing, the Ryff and Keyes (1995) psychological wellbeing scale was used. The scale consists of 18 items and designed on six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale consists of six sub-domains. The scale was piloted before using in the context of the current study. To measure pro-organizational motivation of teachers, the pro-organizational motivation scale will be used. The scale consists of 18 items. The scale was developed by Gagne et al., (2010). The scale was piloted in the current study context before data collection.

Data Collection

The data was collected through personal visits to the respondents by the researchers. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the education department concerned and each participant through a letter of consent. In this regard, the principals were informed about the purpose of the study and anonymity of the data. The objectives of the study were shared with the respondents. They were further informed that the data collected from them will be used as a trust and will not be leaked to others without their permission.

Reliability and validity

The scales were piloted for the purpose of checking reliability and validity. For reliability assessment, Cronbach's Alpha or inter-consistency was used. Two experts from department of education with PhD qualification were engaged for content validity of the scales. Based on their feedback, the scales were finalized for data collection.

Data Analysis

The collected data of the study were analyzed using inferential statistical tools and techniques such as ANOVA statistics. The inferential statistics was used to evaluate the effect of independent variables on dependent variables and the degree, strength and direction of correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Results

Table 1: ANOVA of Principals' Leadership Behaviour and its dimensions based on Gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ACT	Between Groups	1.706	1	1.706	.309	.578
	Within Groups	3677.230	667	5.513		
	Total	3678.936	668			
SDDM	Between Groups	.135	1	.135	.023	.880
	Within Groups	3939.336	667	5.906		
	Total	3939.471	668			
IS	Between Groups	15.013	1	15.013	2.839	.092
	Within Groups	3526.871	667	5.288		
	Total	3541.883	668			
SKD	Between Groups	16.446	1	16.446	4.134	.042
	Within Groups	2653.312	667	3.978		
	Total	2669.758	668			
CIP	Between Groups	18.772	1	18.772	2.572	.109
	Within Groups	4867.428	667	7.297		
	Total	4886.200	668			

DA= delegation of authority, ACT= accountability, SDDM= self-directed decision-making, IS= information sharing, SKD = skills development, CIP= coaching for innovative performance

Table 1 indicates that there was no significant difference among the respondents regarding principals' leadership behaviour based on gender: DA ($F=.323$ $p=.570$), ACT ($F=.309$, $p=.578$), SDDM ($F=.023$, $p=.880$), IS ($F=.2839$, $p=.092$), SDK ($F=.4134$, $p=.042$), CIP ($F=.2572$, $p=.109$). However, there was a meaningful difference in the mean score of one dimension of PLB such

as skill development (SKD) ($F=. 4.134$, $p=. 042$). Hence, the null hypothesis “*There is no difference among the respondents regarding principals’ leadership behaviour based on gender*” was rejected. Thus, it was concluded that except skill development (SKD), there was a significant difference among the participants based on gender regarding principals’ leadership behaviour.

Table 2: ANOVA of Psychological Wellbeing and its dimesons based on Gender

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATO	Between Groups	5.013	1	5.013	.605	.437
	Within Groups	5526.739	667	8.286		
	Total	5531.752	668			
EM	Between Groups	115.176	1	115.176	30.940	.000
	Within Groups	2482.976	667	3.723		
	Total	2598.152	668			
PG	Between Groups	155.238	1	155.238	17.208	.000
	Within Groups	6017.070	667	9.021		
	Total	6172.308	668			
PRO	Between Groups	74.903	1	74.903	7.889	.005
	Within Groups	6332.562	667	9.494		
	Total	6407.465	668			
PL	Between Groups	75.592	1	75.592	10.871	.001
	Within Groups	4637.879	667	6.953		
	Total	4713.471	668			
SA	Between Groups	40.001	1	40.001	9.746	.002
	Within Groups	2737.452	667	4.104		
	Total	2777.453	668			

ATO=autonomy, EM=environmental master, PG= personal growth, PRO= positive relationship with others, PL=purpose of life, SA=self-acceptance

Table 2 indicates that there was a significant difference among the respondents based on gender regarding all dimensions of psychological wellbeing: ATO ($F=.605$ $p=.437$), EM ($F=30.940$, $p=. 000$), PG ($F=17.208$, $p=. 000$), PRO ($F= 7.889$, $p=. 005$), PL ($F= 10.871$, $p=. 001$), SA ($F= 9.746$, $p=. 002$). However, there was no meangiful difference in the mean score of one dimension of PWB such as autonomy (ATO) ($F=. 605$, $p=. 437$). Hence, the hypothesis of the study that “*There is no difference among the respondents regarding Psychological wellbeing based on gender*” was rejected. The study provided the evidence that except autonomy (ATO), there was a difference among the respondents regarding psychological wellbeing based on gender.

Table 3: ANOVA of Pro-organizational Motivation and its four dimensions based on Gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ETR	Between Groups	1.978	1	1.978	.302	.583
	Within Groups	4371.729	667	6.554		
	Total	4373.707	668			
INTO	Between Groups	67.113	1	67.113	1.314	.252
	Within Groups	34073.840	667	51.085		
	Total	34140.954	668			
IDN	Between Groups	17.455	1	17.455	2.615	.106
	Within Groups	4451.436	667	6.674		

	Total	4468.891	668			
	Between Groups	82.859	1	82.859	4.796	.029
INTMO	Within Groups	11522.687	667	17.275		
	Total	11605.546	668			

ER=external regulation, INTO=introjection, IDN=identification, INTMO=intrinsic motivation

Table 3 indicates that there was a significant difference among the respondents regarding alldimensions of psychological wellbeing based on gender: ETR ($F=.302$ $p=.583$), INTO ($F=1.314$, $p=.252$), IDN ($F=2.615$, $p=.106$), INTMO ($F=4.796$, $p=.029$). However, there was no meangiful difference in the mean score of one dimension such as intrinsic motivation(INTMO) ($F=.4796$, $p=.027$). Hence, the hypothesis of the study that “*There is no difference among the respondents regarding pro-organizational motivation based on gender*” was rejected. Thus, it was concluded that except intrinsic motivation (INTMO), there was a significant difference among the respondents regarding all dimensions of POM based on gender.

Table 4: ANOVA of PLB, PWB and POM based on Gender

		Sum Squares	of Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PLB	Between Groups	3623.915	3	1207.972	5.030	.002
	Within Groups	159697.278	665	240.146		
	Total	163321.193	668			
PWB	Between Groups	4678.366	3	1559.455	5.674	.001
	Within Groups	182759.607	665	274.826		
	Total	187437.973	668			
POM	Between Groups	4395.005	3	1465.002	6.210	.000
	Within Groups	156870.968	665	235.896		
	Total	161265.973	668			

PLB= Principals’ Leadership Behaviour, PWB= Psychological Wellbeing, POM= Pro-organizational Motivation

Table 4 indicates that there was a significant difference among the respondents regarding PLB, PWB and POM based on gender. PLB ($F=5.030$ $p=.002$), PWB ($F=5.674$, $p=.001$), POM ($F=6.210$, $p=.000$). Hence, the hypothesis of the study that “*There is no difference among the respondents towards the relationship among PLB, PWB and POM based on gender*” was rejected. Thus, the study found a difference among the respondents regarding the relationship among PLB, PWB and POM based on gender.

Discussion

This study aimed to find out the effect of gender on principals’ leadership behaviour towards teachers’ psychological wellbeing and pro-organizational motivation in high and higher secondary school context. This study found that there was a significant difference among the respondents regarding the effect of gender on five dimensions of principals’ leadership behaviour such as delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision-making, information sharing, and coaching for innovative performance. This finding supports the results of previous studies that gender has a key role in the leadership behaviour of school principals when it comes to delegating powers to the staff and making them accountable to the task assigned to them (Karacabey et al.,

2022). According to researchers, competent school leaders involve their school teachers in the process of decision-making and allow them use the delegated assignment and power with responsibility and commitment. Researchers are of the opinion that good principals share information with all school staff and engage them in the activities positively and also expect some innovative response from them. This expectation creates a synergy which is the main element in the leader staff relationship (Parveen et al., 2022).

This study further explored that there was a positive effect of gender as a factor on the attitude of principals towards five dimensions of teachers' psychological wellbeing such as environmental master, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose of life and self-acceptance. This exploration is in line with the findings of previous studies that highly effective school principals attempt to create a supportive work environment where the teachers and other school staff feel protected and cared (Nombrado, 2025). Researchers have opined that positive school leaders remain active in giving support to their staff members and give them opportunity for professional growth and development. This enables the teachers to grow professionally and mentally. Teachers and administrators have positive relations which further strengthens the overall academic environment of the school paving the way for better performance of teachers and students. In a supportive work environment, the works find the purpose of their duty and perform their duties based on self-acceptance and self-recognition which are essential elements of a successful human relations (Shah et al., 2025). The study further showed that there was a difference among the respondents regarding three dimensions of pro-organizational motivation such as external regulation, introjection, and identification. This finding also supports the results of previous studies that positive school leaders always provide a chance for their staff to contribute towards the academic development of students and their own professional growth. The teachers working in a cooperative social environment get wider recognition not only among the students but also from the administration and community. This adds to the motivation of the staff which resultantly enhances their pro-organizational motivation and commitment (Shi et al., 2024). Studies have revealed that a successful school has progressive leadership who provide better instructional environment and increase the motivation level of their staff. The current study found a difference among the respondents based on gender regarding the interlink between principals' leadership behaviour, teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-organizational motivation. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies (Els & Jacobs, 2023). Researchers have reported strong positive correlation between principals' leadership behaviour and teachers' job commitment and pro-organizational motivation. It has been shared that teachers remain active in such an educational environment where the school leaders focus on their professional development and give them respect. A strong significant association has been found between principals' leadership and teachers psychological wellbeing. Positive leadership behaviour has been accepted to be a strong predictor of teachers' mental wellbeing (Iqbal et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study makes it clear that gender has a key role to play in the interlink between principals' leadership and teachers' wellbeing and motivation. It is concluded that gender makes a difference in the attitude of principals towards teachers' psychologic wellbeing. When principals provide active leadership behaviour by creating supportive work environment, it positively affects teachers' feelings of ownership and also enhances their commitment and motivation for school as organization. This study further concluded that gender also has an effect on the attitude of principals towards teachers' pro-organizational motivation. Those teachers who find guidance and recognition from their principals make a positive contribution towards their school and remain proactive in the performance of their duties. This study provided the evidence that there was a

gender based difference among the school principals regarding the correlation between principals' leadership behaviour, teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-organizational motivation. These evidences provide the arguments that policy makers and educational leaders may focus and highlight the role of gender and its effects on the association between school leadership, teachers' wellness and their job motivation.

Future recommendations

Further studies may carry out additional investigations to discern powerful effect of other demographic variables such as qualification, experience and age. This may further clarify the school leadership role of principals and its associations with teachers' psychological wellbeing and their pro-motivation.

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