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## Relationship between School Leadership Development Program and Skills Development of Secondary School Heads in District Sargodha

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between the school leadership development program and skills development of the secondary school heads in District Sargodha. The overall professional management skills may be enhanced through the school leadership development program. It is also helpful to enhance the knowledge, skills, and hands-on experiences of heads at the institutional level to improve organizational performance.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A correlational research design was adopted for the study. A Quantitative research method based on a survey was used for collecting data and a self-developed questionnaire consisting of 50 close-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument's reliability was measured at 0.95. The population included all head teachers of government secondary schools in District Sargodha. Using convenience sampling technique 300 head teachers were selected from seven tehsils within the district. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson  $r$  and independent  $t$ -tests and descriptive statistics.

**Findings:** The analysis revealed a significantly positive large correlation between the variables, with  $R$ -values of .849 and .892. It is concluded that the School Leadership Development Program significantly affects the skill development of the secondary school heads. A significant strong positive large correlation was identified between the leadership development program and the skill development of the school head teachers.

**Implications/Originality/Value:** The present study has a great effect on the skills development of secondary school heads.

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## **1. Introduction**

The success of institutions largely relies on their leaders, who are responsible for decision-making and ensuring those decisions align with institutional goals. By adopting the right leadership style, school principals play a pivotal role in driving their schools toward excellence. This makes effective leadership styles and skills highly sought after (Turner, 2019). Principals must adopt leadership styles that are adaptable to their evolving roles. However, a shortage of such leadership is noted, and leadership training or professional development programs are recommended to address this gap (Woulfin & Kruse, 2018). According to Prastiawan et al. (2020) leadership is the ability to respect and promote the support of people to achieve the purpose of the organization. Effective leadership includes creating future organizations and requires cooperation with a large-scale network while maintaining motivation among major members. School leadership development programs are tailored for head teachers and school leaders seeking to advance their careers. These programs focus on essential areas such as school leadership, educational management, quality assurance, and curriculum development, aiming to broaden participants' management and teaching expertise. The goal of these leadership training initiatives is to improve the knowledge, communication skills, and experience of school administrators, ultimately contributing to improving academic performance and maximizing student achievement. The program also aims to provide participants with the specialized skills necessary to implement and maintain effective programs and ensure a strong quality control system in their schools. The School Leadership Development Programme equates participants with vital skills, knowledge, and hands-on experience. They will have the opportunity to gain a firsthand understanding of the UK education system by engaging directly with seasoned UK school leaders and educators. According to Mulyono (2018) managerial and administrative skills are critical in preparing managers to make strategic decisions regarding their organization's purpose and priorities, enabling better allocation of resources for execution. Effective leadership also includes the ability to delegate efficiently, foster collaboration, and build connections (Lonyian, 2018).

Kariuki (2016) highlight the increasing need for school leaders to possess both soft and hard skills in today's competitive and dynamic environment. Modern institutions prioritize group development and soft skills, such as teamwork, as essential to improving employee performance. In addition to the knowledge associated with a degree, organizations value employees' general skills as well as their professional experience and academic training. Masenya (2022) describes soft skills as a blend of qualities, habits, personality traits, attitudes, and social behaviors that people utilize in their personal and professional lives. Likewise, Lorenz (2009) describes soft skills as a set of personal attributes, customs, attitudes, and social advantages that make individuals well-suited to being exemplary employees. L terms such as personal skills, major abilities, and basic skills are often used to be replaced with "soft skills" (Sebastian et al., 2019). Liljenberg (2021) highlights the importance of strengthening the capacity-building efforts for school heads to improve overall school performance. Professional development has become increasingly significant for enhancing school leadership and fostering student learning. Head teachers who participate in professional development programs are encouraged to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in practice. Professional development encompasses a range of activities, including formal and informal practices, scheduled training sessions, conferences, seminars, workshops, refresher courses, and peer debates and discussions (Service & Thornton, 2021). Shahzad and Rabica (2020) propose that the inclusion of well-trained educational leaders is essential for driving positive change within educational institutions. They emphasize that all educational leaders must engage in professional learning to enhance their effectiveness.

### **1.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the relationship between school leadership development program and soft skills of secondary school heads.
2. Determine the relationship between school leadership development program and administrative skills of secondary school heads.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Following were the research questions of the study.

1. Is there any significant relationship between school leadership development program and soft skills of secondary school heads?
2. Is there any significant relationship between the school leadership development program and administrative skills of secondary school heads?

## **2. Literature Review**

Heads teachers with insights and knowledge about school leadership development programs should share their perspectives with others. Huber (2008) emphasizes that school leaders must be proficient in data analysis, school management, academic content, and instructional methods. To support this, the government should establish learning plans for school principals to enhance their capabilities and keep their skills up-to-date. To fully develop head teachers' potential, the government should also organize School Leadership Development Programs (SLDPs). These activities and training can be carried out through various approaches. Chika (2020) describes leadership as a complex and multifaceted field that has garnered significant attention and extensive research. Despite its importance, the intricate nature of leadership often makes it a challenging and confusing subject to discuss. Consequently, it remains one of the most studied yet least understood topics.

In Asian countries, particularly Malaysia, several empirical studies have been conducted on this topic. Tertiary education in Malaysia is increasingly focusing on the development of soft skills (Lani et al., 2023). According to Bolanle (2013), hard skills are quantifiable and easy to observe, making them straightforward to teach and learn. Most individuals do not need special attitudes or behaviors to acquire these skills since they are well-established and relatively simple to master. On the other hand, soft skills, such as managing people, listening, and effective communication, are more challenging to learn, measure, and quantify, yet play a crucial role in leadership and interpersonal interactions.

The Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) is an institution that has provided a valuable and unending series of facilities for the training of teachers over the last few decades. Firstly, the institution was known as the Education Extension Centre, and it contributed to the provision of quality education by preparing the teacher and it also worked as a change agent. Its only objective is to rise the professional standards of trainings through the meritorious services to the teacher. It works for the betterment of the teachers working in the province and capitalizes the training through a chain of 29 elementary colleges that provide training to newly recruited teachers as well as in-service training throughout their careers (Wasim, 2019).

In 2012 the institutions provided training to 172,000 head teachers and the upcoming years saw a rise in quality and quantity (Wasim, 2019). DSD has assessed itself throughout its history and has undertaken various trainings in colleges under its supervision such as the Provincial Teacher Education Institute and Government Primary Teacher College in 2006. In 2009, two other institutes, the Punjab Teacher Education Institute and Centre for Science Education, were merged and strengthened into the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) making it the sole agency responsible for the professional development of teachers (Renata et al., 2018). Administrative skills involve the ability to achieve predetermined outcomes with maximum efficiency, using the least amount of time and energy. Educational reforms in developed nations have highlighted the importance of leadership skills in head teachers for improving school performance. School administrators can serve as mentors in both teaching and learning, guide their colleagues, and be experts in their respective fields (Iskamtoet al., 2021). The Directorate of Staff Development turned into QAED recently, deciding to provide a standard education and learning environment. It works with the collaboration of teachers, writers and teacher trainers of both public and private sectors in education. It plays a role in understanding the basic concepts of various subjects with comprehensive helping guides. The teacher's guide provides a helping hand and facilitates the teachers in the classroom all the time. They

set goals through students learning goals. The Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development plays a key role in supporting teacher training and coaching for their professional growth (Wasim, 2019). The School Leadership Development Programme (SLDP) is a training initiative aimed at principals of primary and secondary schools in Punjab. This program is a joint effort between the Punjab School Education Department (SED) and the Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED), in collaboration with the British Council. The program was launched in 2017 by the British Council in government schools across Punjab. The program was aimed to involve 15000 administrators of the elementary and high schools. This program aimed to cultivate leadership skills in head teachers, ranging from elementary to higher secondary levels. A key feature of the training network is its focus on developing both soft and administrative skills.

The soft skills emphasized in the program include effective leadership, communication and teamwork, team building, presentation skills, motivation, social cohesion, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, imagination, citizenship, personal development, empathy, and behavioral change. School administrators must possess educational leadership skills that are essential for head teachers to enhance both the internal and external functioning of their schools. Maintaining discipline is crucial, as it is considered fundamental to effective learning (Lani et al., 2023). The findings of Renata, Wardiah, and Kristiawan's (2018) study demonstrate that the abilities of the principal have a significant impact on soft skills.

In addition, school heads must exhibit traits that ensure the smooth operation of their institutions, such as implementing staff regulations that promote the adoption of new teaching methodologies. Administrative skills, based on Training Need Analysis (TNA), are applied to carry out responsibilities and duties in alignment with job descriptions under school administration and management. The head teacher should have a strong command of the following administrative skills, decision-making power, teaching methodology, leave rule PEEDA act 2006, monitoring and evaluation, and department policies. The philosophy behind the School Leadership Development Program (SLDP) is to embrace a dynamic global perspective and adapt to evolving circumstances. Its main objective is to develop effective leadership and management by equipping people with the knowledge and unique "leadership behavior skills" that will ensure optimal performance in all areas of school administration and management (Lai et al., 2020).

School heads must also adapt their roles to meet the needs of learners. Mulyono (2018) expresses concern over the political instability in the region, noting that leaders are reluctant to decentralize the education system for personal gain, which contributes to the ongoing ineffectiveness of training programs, along with other persistent issues. Quality leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing student outcomes, helping students develop leadership qualities and transform both themselves and society, becoming productive members of their communities. He stresses the importance of school leadership, ranking it just behind classroom teaching in terms of impact. In his research, Mulyono concludes that effective leadership contributes to a 5-7% improvement in the lives of school children, with students gaining about a quarter of a point in their scores by learning leadership qualities (Lani et al., 2023).

### **3. Methodology**

This study utilized a correlational research design. Correlational research is concerned with establishing a relationship between two or more variables. The researcher tried to find the relationship between the school leadership development program, soft and administrative skills development of secondary school heads in district Sargodha. The population of the study consisted of all government secondary school principals and headmasters of the Sargodha district, both male and female. Currently, there are 352 head teachers in the Sargodha district. The study sample consisted of 300 head teachers from the Sargodha district. Although the questionnaire was distributed to all the school heads, the researcher received 300 completed questionnaires in return.

The researchers created a questionnaire to about the School leadership program and skills development of secondary school heads. It included 50 closed-ended statements on a five-point Likert scale. The first 25 items related to leadership programs, covered areas such as critical thinking, self-regulation, code of conduct, and student learning outcomes. The remaining 25 items focused on soft skills like communication, digital literacy, motivation, problem-solving, and moral values, as well as administrative skills such as teacher attendance, financial management, professional development, and the organization and oversight of extracurricular activities.

**Reliability and Validity**

The reliability of the 50-item scale was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, which was found 0.95. The validity of the instrument was confirmed through expert reviews. The convenience sampling method was used for data collection. The first and second authors are head teachers and they are training masters of SLDP. The researchers collected data from 300 principals, and head teachers of secondary schools of Sargodha district. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, Pearson r, and Independent t-test samples were used to evaluate the data with SPSS version 22.0.

**4. Findings**

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, Pearson r, and Independent t-test samples were used to evaluate the data with SPSS version 22.0.

**Table 1:**

*Correlation between School Leadership Development Program and Soft Skills of Secondary School Heads*

Variables	N	r- value	Sig.(2-tailed)
School Leadership Development Program And Soft Skills	300	.892	<.001

Source: Authors' compilation

A Pearson r was used to find out the relationship between school leadership development program and the soft skills of secondary school heads. The finding indicates that there is a significant positive large correlation ( $r=0.892^{**}$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between school leadership development programs and soft skills.

**Table 2:**

*Correlation between School Leadership Development Program and Administrative Skills of Secondary School Heads*

Variables	N	r- value	Sig.(2-tailed)
School Leadership Development Program And Administrative Skills	300	.849	<.001

Source: Authors' compilation

A Pearson r was used to calculate the correlation between the School Leadership Development Program and the administrative skills of secondary school heads. The results indicated a strong, significant positive correlation ( $r=0.849^{**}$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between the leadership development program and administrative skills, with significance at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level.

**Table 3:**

*Independent t-test on gender differences about the Effect of School Leadership Development Program and Skills Development at the Secondary Level*

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t-value	df	Sig.
School Leadership Development Program	Male	123	98.04	17.04	2.401	218.586	0.023
	Female	177	102.24	13.20			

Source: Authors' compilation

An independent sample t-test was used to compare male and female school heads regarding the effect of the School Leadership Development Program and skills development at the secondary level. The results revealed a significant difference ( $t=2.401$ ,  $p=0.023$ ) in the perceptions of male and female secondary school heads about the program, with a significance level of  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## **5. Discussion**

The current study aimed to find out the "Relationship between School Leadership Development Program and skill development of secondary school heads in District Sargodha." The 1st research question was, "Is there any significant difference between the School Leadership Development Program and skills development of secondary school heads?" For this purpose, Pearson r correlation was used and it was found a significant strong positive large correlation ( $r=0.892^{**}$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between school leadership development program and soft skills. These results are consistent with Northouse (2007), who found that leadership development programs significantly benefit head teachers. The findings of Renata, Wardiah, and Kristiawan's (2018) study demonstrate that the abilities of the principal have a significant impact on soft skills. The second research question is "Is there any significant relationship between the school leadership development program with administrative skills of secondary school heads. The finding describes that there is a strong positive relationship between school leadership development programs and administrative skills ( $r=0.849^{**}$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). This study's findings are similar Prastiawan et al. (2020) who state that mastery of administrative skills is necessary for all education administrators. As skills are the capacity to perform tasks based on professional competencies, with observable outcomes. So, it is concluded that the School Leadership Development Program enhances a wide range of competencies among head teachers, including critical thinking, shared leadership, social interaction, creativity, activity planning, positive behavior development, classroom management, empowerment, team building, effective communication, decision-making, digital literacy, optimization, citizenship, moral values, lesson planning, motivation, pedagogical skills, adherence to national professional teaching standards, coaching, problem-solving, professional skills, financial management, organizing co-curricular activities, vision building, instructional technology, monitoring, and overall leadership for both teachers and students.

These conclusions align with Kariuki (2016) research, who underscored the importance of structured leadership development programs for the vocational training of head teachers in Pakistan.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study aimed to assess the "relationship between school leadership development program and skills development of secondary school heads in district Sargodha". The results showed that the majority of head teachers were pleased with the program, indicating that the SLDP had a significant positive correlation with skills development. The program was found to improve a broad range of competencies in school heads, such as critical thinking, collaborative leadership, social skills, creativity, activity design, fostering positive behavior, classroom management, empowerment, team building, effective communication, decision-making, digital literacy, optimization, citizenship awareness, moral development, lesson planning, motivation, teaching skills, adherence to national professional standards, coaching, problem-solving, professional abilities, financial management, organizing extracurricular activities, vision development, use of educational technology, monitoring, and overall leadership capacities for both teachers and student. So, it is concluded that SLDP has a significantly strong positive large correlation to all soft skills and administrative skills of head teachers.

## **7. Recommendations**

1. The study suggests that school development programs and training sessions should be conducted twice a year.

2. School Leadership Development Programs should be introduced to improve the soft and administrative skills of school head teachers.
3. These programs should also include evaluations of the soft and administrative skills of secondary school heads before each new training cycle.
4. School development programs and training may be arranged to increase the knowledge and perception of the head teachers to enhance their leadership competencies.
5. The other administrations such as DEOs, Deputy DEOs, and AEOs should have been trained through this program to get better results in the education field.
6. School heads should organize specialized training sessions to enhance these skills in their staff and engage in discussions with one another about the skills they have developed through the SLDP.

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### **Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of any institution.

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