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Analysis of Principals Distributed Leadership Practices at Secondary School Level: A Perceptual Stance of Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract: The present study aimed to investigate the perceptual stance of teachers regarding principal-distributed leadership practices at the secondary school level. Positivism research philosophy was applied. Thus, survey research was employed. A sample of 351 SSTs was selected from four districts (D.I. Khan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, and Tank) by using a stratified sampling method. Yamane's (1967) formula was applied to determine the representative sample size. An adapted scale, known as the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS), was developed by the Connecticut Department of Education and based on Elmore's (2000). The Content Validity Index (CVI) was utilized by the researcher to evaluate the content validity, whereas the reliability of the instrument was estimated by using Cronbach's Alpha, which was estimated at .835. The researcher used an independent sample t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied. The result of the study indicates that male school heads engaged teachers in different school activities, such as decision-making processes, community practices, and professional development activities, compared to female school heads. The study concluded that principals who were more qualified and experienced engaged teachers in school activities as compared to those principals who were less qualified and less experienced. The study recommended that the government may arrange workshops for principals regarding distributed leadership and may try to implement it in schools to uplift the quality of education.

Keywords: Distributed Leadership, Principals, Secondary School Teachers (SSTs)

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Introduction

Three elements, including leaders, followers, and circumstances, interact to form the system of activities known as leadership. Spillane created the practice-based distributive leadership model. The first aspect of leadership pertains to school leaders. However, principals are not the main focus because distributive leadership involves interactions between several leaders rather than simply one. Thus, head teachers, senior assistants, department heads, and subject panel heads are all considered leaders in distributive leadership (Bagwell, 2019)

Principals are essential because they are the ones who know their staff, school context, and organizational culture the best and can effectively manage their resources to carry out essential organizational functions through leadership practice. Distributed leadership would help to decongest school management, boost school autonomy, encourage collaborative work, and enhance participation in institutional decision-making because it offers the possibility of having numerous leaders who can cooperate in both formal and informal capacities (Jambo & Hongde, 2019).

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The practice of leadership that arises from the interaction of the three elements leaders, followers, and situations—is known as distributive leadership. Distributive leadership is characterized by four elements: collective participation, shared decision-making, leadership development, and constrained power. The gender of school leaders is one element that may have an impact on their distributive leadership techniques. According to several investigations, school leaders' distributive leadership styles change significantly depending on their gender (Bellibas & Liu, 2018). Followers who make references to educators in classrooms or members of the professional learning community make up the second element of Spillane's distributive leadership paradigm. Because they support leadership practice by interacting with the circumstance, followers are a crucial part of leadership practice. The circumstance in which people take action to put distributive leadership techniques into effect makes up the third element of Spillane's paradigm. Situations relate to instruments, practices, and frameworks (Börü, 2020).

Leadership practices within an organization have been found to be influenced by demographic characteristics. Gender is one of the school leader's demographic characteristics. Divergent views exist among researchers regarding the connection between gender and distributed leadership techniques. Research has indicated notable distinctions between the distributive leadership styles of male and female leaders. According to a study, when given the role of school principal, female leaders believe they are incapable of exercising leadership. Several scholars agree with the study's findings, arguing that a woman teacher's job is comparable to a mother's job of taking care of the home and being a housewife and mother. As a result, female educators are more equipped to handle classroom and student issues (Bagwell, 2019).

According to Kumari (2021), there are more female principals than male principals. It has been discovered, meanwhile, that more male principals than female principals employ distributive leadership. This suggests that the approaches taken by male and female principals are different. According to Vlachadi and Ferla (2013), male and female leaders employ different distributive leadership techniques. However, she also discovered that gender-based leadership differences could not be directly explained by socialization techniques and gender roles, nor were they caused by biological variations. Instead, it should be viewed as a way to understand how specific gender-specific behaviors are unique and dominating in the setting of masculine organizations. The present study aimed to investigate the perceptual stance of teachers regarding principal-distributed leadership practices at the secondary school level.

Objectives of the Study
The following objectives were made to achieve: -
1. To compare the distributed leadership practices between male and female principals of secondary schools.
2. To discover distributed leadership practices from the perspective of the locality.
3. To examine the distributed leadership practices across educational backgrounds and experiences.

Literature Review
Leadership
Leadership is an advanced technique of collaborating with individuals inside a school to accomplish a specific goal. Those in managerial leadership roles need to be aware of the school environment and be able to relate other people's actions to the structure of the school (Shaked et al., 2018). According to Eboka (2016), the supervisor needs to have a leadership vision in order to guide the staff. The single most essential factor that can have a major impact on a school's success is its leadership. Teachers can be inspired to put in more effort at work by successful and effective school leaders who can build and foster strong relationships. According to Ibrahim & Al-Taneiji (2013), motivating and inspiring, influencing others, setting an example, assisting others in realizing their potential, selflessness, and making a difference are some definitions of leadership. The definition of leadership is guiding a team and establishing connections while they share, develop, move toward, and then embody a vision. Every educator also stresses how crucial a leader's character and sincerity are to fostering the faith required for leadership and long-term goal achievement.

In education, leadership entails guiding the efforts of those engaged in mind training toward the accomplishment of objectives established by those who have prepared for it. In an educational setting, the head teacher serves as the

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principal's representative. Every institution needs to have the authority to allocate its resources including cash, supplies, and personnel—to organizational norms and objectives. There must be authority to guide staff and students' actions in order to help the school achieve its stated goals. That force and the leadership style are expressed via leadership (Bluestein & Goldschmidt, 2021).

The effectiveness and advancement of the school are significantly influenced by the head teacher's leadership style. Head teachers' leadership philosophies have a significant impact on both teacher motivation and student learning outcomes. Student learning achievement is directly impacted by the leadership style of head teachers and the school environment. Head teacher's leadership style can foster an environment that is supportive and understanding of the institution's instructional priorities. In summary, it can be said that school leadership significantly influences both school efficacy and improvement (Eboka, 2016).

The literature research indicates that various leadership philosophies are founded on various ideas and presumptions. In addition to corporate rules, culture, and circumstances that support some leadership philosophies and discourage others, people's values, beliefs, and preferences all influence the leadership style they employ. At the same time, it should be noted that different leadership styles are needed depending on the situation. A leader who wants to be the best and most successful must develop an authoritative manner. Democratic or laissez-faire approaches may be more effective when a team is uniformly highly motivated, knowledgeable, and cohesive (Eyal & Roth, 2011).

Role of Principal as Leader

It is important to note that the head teacher or principal, who serves as the center of the educational system, is intimately familiar with the conditions and ambiance of educational establishments, has direct authority over teachers, and collaborates with the local community, is unaffected by the decentralization of power plan. Instead of actively participating in school growth to improve quality, many school heads continue to receive policy decisions (Dare & Saleem, 2022).

The fundamental element in managing schools is leadership style. Leadership and management are two sides of the same coin. In this case, a leader's duty is crucial for both pointing out the shortcomings in school administration and offering direction for the smooth and successful operation of the institutions. The leadership styles of head teachers are the subject of various research. secondary school heads' administrative leadership philosophies affected the performance of teachers in Pakistan's NWFP (Akbar et al., 2022)

Salfi, Virk, and Hussain (2014) studied secondary school head teachers' leadership philosophies. Pakistani school level. A small sample was chosen for earlier studies, and school directors' leadership philosophies were examined in conjunction with other factors. The goal of the current study was to close the research gap by examining the leadership styles of school heads while providing fair representation for all areas of Punjab province.

Distributed Leadership

One of the leadership philosophies aiming for both national and international attention as well as expanded maintenance in contemporary educational discourse is distributed leadership. A concept called "distributed leadership" uses fictitious grounds to study how leaders operate in various companies. The phrase "distributed leadership" mostly refers to conventional management structures that have been modified to include more members of the company in decision-making and leadership positions. Additionally, it describes a formal organizational structure that prioritizes line management. An organization's senior personnel are either part of the leadership team or the senior management team (Galdames-Calderón, 2023).

According to Bush's (2023) distributed leadership theory, all team members take responsibility for the organization's decisions, and all employees share accountability. Since distributed leadership is essential to the teaching and learning process in a school context, Spillane et al. (2001) assert that it is crucial for educational institutions. They also decided that all members of the school community teachers, head teachers, and deputy principals are involved in dispersed leadership. The group as a whole is in charge of decision-making and

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accountability. One distinctive feature of distributed leadership is how a network of interacting individuals or groups engage with one another.

Aypay and Akyürek (2021) assert that there are various definitions of distributed leadership. It is regarded as a new leadership theory that emphasizes each employee's unique traits, talents, and skills. This leadership theory emphasizes shared responsibility as well. Distributed leadership is synonymous with shared, dispersed, democratic, and collaborative leadership.

According to the distributed leadership perspective, different leaders are needed for school management, and accountability should be shared or split. A distributed leadership model that aligns with the educational system fosters accountability and sharing. This type of leadership ensures that other members of the organization are given authority and responsibilities at educational institutions. All members of the organization share the accountability principle as a result of this distribution (Bush, 2023).

Distributed leadership appears to be a useful element in the establishment of democracy in schools and has a significant impact on the dissemination of accountability. When teachers share leadership in school management and take part in decision-making, it becomes possible to establish a democratic climate in schools (Tejeiro, 2024).

According to Galdames-Calderón (2023), distributed leadership is a style of leadership that prioritizes interaction over official and informal leadership role acts. It is a contemporary leadership strategy that emphasizes the importance of the terms "teamwork building" and "shared responsibility" by arguing that leaders should collaborate with groups rather than relying just on individual performance. Many leaders and a shared leadership activity within an organization are examples of distributed leadership. Amzat et al. (2022) has separated distributed leadership into three categories: open leadership, member participation and dynamism, and situational atmosphere. However, UCar (2021) proposed three aspects of distributed leadership: employee involvement and dynamism, school culture, and open leadership. Open leadership entails letting go of the need for control, being self-assured yet modest, and motivating others to pursue their goals. With distributed leadership, all staff members have a voice in leadership decisions rather than having all of the authority concentrated in one person. Given this, it necessitates being receptive to all surrounding factors.

Research Methodology

Positivism research philosophy was used because statistical hypotheses were generated. Moreover, survey research was employed. In this research, secondary school teachers (SSTs) from districts D.I.Khan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, and Tank constituted the study population. A sample of 351 SSTs was selected by using a stratified sampling method. Yamane's (1967) formula was applied to determine the representative sample size. An adapted scale, known as the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS), was developed by the Connecticut Department of Education and based on Elmore's (2000). The Content Validity Index (CVI) was utilized by the researcher to evaluate the content validity, whereas the reliability of the instrument was estimated by using Cronbach's Alpha, which was estimated at .835. The researcher used an independent sample t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied.

Result and Discussion

Table 1

Showing Mean differences regarding Distributed Leadership Practices based on Gender

Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-cal	Sig.
Male	217	4.1985	.51843	12.92	.000
Female	121	3.4982	.62851		

Table 1 illustrates the Mean difference in male and female principal distributed leadership practices as perceived by teachers. The above statistical result depicts that the Mean value of male principals (Mean= 4.1985) is estimated to be higher than the Mean value of female principals (Mean=3.4982), which indicates that distributed leadership practices in male principals were found to be higher than that of female principals. In addition, the value of p=.000<.05 shows a significant difference in the distributed leadership practices between male and female school principals.

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Table 2

Showing Mean Difference Regarding Distributed Leadership Practices in Perspective of Locality (District)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	67.506	3	26.268	74.287	.000
Within Groups	102.528	334	.328		
Total	170.034	337			

Table 2 indicates the Mean difference in distributed leadership in school principals from the perspective of locality (districts). The above statistical result indicates that the value of F=74.287 with p=.000<.05 indicates a significant difference in distributed leadership practices based on districts. So, the hypothesis claimed that no significant difference regarding distributed leadership practices of school heads in the perspective of locality (districts) was found to be rejected.

Table 3

Showing Mean Difference Regarding Distributed Leadership Practices in the Perspective of Qualification

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.172	2	7.298	21.381	.000
Within Groups	157.862	335	.519		
Total	170.034	337			

Table 3 indicates the mean difference in distributed leadership in school principals in terms of qualification. The above statistical result indicates that the value of F=21.281 with p=.000<.05 indicates a significant difference in distributed leadership practices based on districts. So, the hypothesis claimed that no significant difference regarding distributed leadership practices of school heads in the perspective of qualification was found to be rejected.

Table 4

Showing Mean Difference Regarding Distributed Leadership Practices in Perspective of Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	69.506	3	29.162	68.324	.000
Within Groups	103.528	334	.421		
Total	173.034	337			

Table 4 indicates the Mean difference in distributed leadership in school principals from a perspective of experience. The above statistical result indicates that the value of F=68.324 with p=.000<.05 indicates a significant difference in distributed leadership practices based on districts. So, the hypothesis claimed that no significant difference regarding distributed leadership practices of school heads in perspective of experience was found to be rejected.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the perceptual stance of teachers regarding principal-distributed leadership practices at the secondary school level. The result of the study depicts that there is a significant difference between male and female school heads in distributed leadership practices. Botha (2016) drew a similar result. He found that male principals were more involved teachers in different school activities than female principals. A similar result was drawn by Vlachedi and Ferla (2013). They found male principals engaged more staff members, especially in decision-making practices, than female principals. The result of the study reveals that there is a significant difference in distributed leadership practices from the perspective of qualification and experience. The result of the study is in line

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with Lahtero et al. ([2019](#)). They found qualified and experienced principals are more involved in distributed leadership practices than those principals who are less qualified and experienced.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The study concluded that male school heads engaged teachers in different school activities, such as the decision-making process, community practices, and professional development activities, as compared to female school heads. The study concluded that principals who were more qualified and experienced engaged teachers in school activities as compared to those principals who were less qualified and less experienced. Moreover, School male principals have a natural tendency to prefer distributed leadership that is more collaborative and relationship-focused, whereas female principals are found to prioritize task-oriented leadership. The study recommended that the government may arrange workshops for principals regarding distributed leadership and may try to implement it in schools to uplift the quality of education. The study recommended that a shared responsibilities approach be adopted by the school heads to enhance the school's overall performance.

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