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Development of Students' Leadership at University Level: Perceptions and Perspective

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Abstract: *The study examines student leadership, its importance, and the various factors involved in cultivating and growing student leaders. Effective student leadership fosters a sense of belonging, raises engagement levels, and enables people to take an active role in their education. Student leaders need to encourage, support, and work towards addressing societal issues like poverty, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. Student leaders collaborate with local and national civil society organizations working on anti-corruption initiatives. There is a growing curiosity about student leadership's effects on learners, educational institutions, and society as a whole. The design of the quantitative investigation was created. The study's population consisted of all public and private universities in Lahore that have been accredited by HEC. The method of stratified sampling was applied. A public institution and a private university were chosen. A total of 100 students from public and 100 from private universities were taken into consideration. 200 students made up the sample in total. The results suggest certain aspects of leadership emphasizing the significance of the university environment including educational and co-curricular activities.*

Key Words: 21st Century Skills, Specially-abled Students, Strategies, Approaches, Teachers

Introduction

The first goal of developing student leadership is the desire to lead (Hartanto, H.2021). Researchers have studied several aspects of student leadership, from its benefits for certain individuals to its value for entire groups (Volkan, V., 2021). Leadership, management, and administration are related ideas that have been emphasized over time and in a variety of contexts (Harris, M.S., 2019). However, its effectiveness varies across countries and professional cultures. For example, in English-speaking countries, the role of leadership is extremely emphasized (Tarker .D.,2019).

These countries are trying to raise standards and encourage leadership programs while this is not happening in other countries like Pakistan (Baker-Korotkov, K. 2020). Inequality reveals differences in the structure and management of the education system. It shows the differences in their historical, national, and regional political contexts (Murphy, B., 2022).

The modern era of educational leadership has brought a new perspective on student leadership (Black et al., 2020). Somewhat recently, in this century, the concept of student leadership has evolved. All students must have leadership qualities/skills. Teaching the value

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of teamwork and leadership in formal courses is not the only way to teach students how to be good leaders. These teachings are easy to read and quickly ignored (Harms, P., 2022). Leadership does not automatically become an inherent part of the student (Alshammari, F et al., 2021). Regularly scheduling academic and extracurricular events is a simple method for teaching leadership (Chamunyonga, C., et al., 2020). These events/activities help students learn the value of leadership, learn new leadership skills, and expand current skills (Charlie, 2011; Kasirye, F., & Wok, S. 2020; National FFA Organization, 2009). Research has suggested that well-designed, comprehensive leadership development initiatives positively influence student leadership and behaviour (Elzein, K. A. 2021; Eagly, A. H., & Hyseni Duraku, Z., & Hoxha, L. 2021).

The basic social view believes that qualitative differences in the status of men and women affect their performance. Gender is an important issue. There is a general observation that the role of men is more suited to leadership positions than women's roles (Tremmel, M., 2023). Various studies have shown that the qualities of popular leaders are similar to males rather than females. It clarifies the efforts of women to achieve leadership positions (Castaño et al., 2019). Above all, leaders are seen as having manly qualities similar to those of men rather than women (Koenig et al., 2011). As a result, it is easier for men to enter leadership positions in the company's hierarchy (Badura et al., 2018), however, it is difficult for women to attain a senior position in an organization (Noori, A. Q. 2021)).

Research Objectives

- To determine the extent to which different factors support university students' development as leaders.
- To assess how graduate and post-graduate students perceive their universities' contribution to the development of leadership skills.

Null Hypothesis

The opinions of graduates and postgraduate

students about the importance of universities in developing leadership skills are not significantly different.

Significance of the study

The study emphasized that student leaders can actively engage with policymakers, government officials, and educational institutions to organize student-friendly policies, like affordable tuition fees, scholarships, and student representation in decision-making processes. Student leaders could develop a sense of empathy, social consciousness, and a commitment to positively impacting society by organizing and participating in community service activities, advocacy campaigns, and awareness programs. The study examines student leadership, its importance, and the various factors involved in cultivating and growing student leaders. Effective student leadership fosters a sense of belonging, raises engagement levels, and enables people to take an active role in their education. Student leaders need to encourage, support, and work towards addressing societal issues like poverty, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. Student leaders collaborate with local and national civil society organizations working on anti-corruption initiatives. There is a growing curiosity about student leadership's effects on learners, educational institutions, and society as a whole.

Review of Related Literature

Leadership Skill Acquisition and Personal Development are essential aspects of an individual's growth, both personally and professionally. They involve the development of skills, traits, and qualities that enable effective leadership and personal growth. Several models and concepts are associated with these areas. Personal development involves setting goals, creating action plans, and continually improving oneself through self-assessment, skill acquisition, and continuous learning (Tarker, D. 2019)). The situational leadership model suggests that different situations require different approaches to leadership (Tipu, S. A. A. 2021). The model of

transformational leadership emphasizes inspires and motivates followers to perform extraordinarily (Yeomans, L., & Bowman, S. [2021](#)). It has been observed that leaders with a growth mindset are more open to challenges, failures, and learning opportunities (Rahimi, Z., et. Al., [2020](#)). Constructive feedback helps leaders identify areas for improvement, while reflection enhances self-awareness and decision-making ((Lee, S. H. [2020](#)).

Students who apply the deep learning method have better learning results than those who apply the surface learning method (Moreira et al., 2020). It has been observed that the learning environment has a positive effect on the leadership development of students (Akhmetshin et al., 2019). The development influences students' thinking, feelings, and behaviour (Altan et al., 2019).

The results of university learning are influenced by curriculum, learning environment, and extracurricular activities, (Bowman, 2010). A well-designed curriculum improves students' leadership skills (Apesin, A., & Gong, T. [2021](#))). In addition, creating a mutual relationship with the environment helps students to grow well in the university. The leadership development of Iranian students was considered. Certain factors like participation in university, emotional intelligence, and students' self-confidence were found (Latif, K. F., et al., [2020](#)).

It is argued that leadership development is a learning process. The leadership skills of the students are enhanced through training in leadership principles. Motivation helps students improve their leadership skills in college and higher education. Effective student leadership grows a sense of belonging and engagement. It empowers students to keenly participate in education (Cho, C. C., & Kao, R. H. [2022](#)).

The role of teachers cannot be ignored as experienced, motivated, and inspired teachers play a key role in educating grownups in their respective countries with the demanded knowledge, skills, and values (Bloch, K. R., et al., [2021](#)). Teachers set an example for students and influence them with their

excellent knowledge and ethics (Wu & Dai,2018). Institutional success depends largely on employee satisfaction (Caza, A., et al., [2021](#)) reported in their study that organizational leaders who promoted a shared vision and an atmosphere of trust, support, and collaboration were successful in improving the quality of work and education. Bryman (2007) applies transformational leadership with a participatory decision-making approach in organizations (Tipu et al.,2021). Teacher attrition/retention is an important issue for administrators and policymakers.

The above studies show the importance of leadership qualities in different academic areas. There is a need for leadership in the administration and management of higher education institutions. Several studies have examined the function of colleges and universities in student development. None of the research in the past in Pakistan was discovered that specifically examined how students' experiences in leadership courses at universities affected their growth as leaders.

Research Design and Methodology

The research was planned. The study's population consisted of all public and private universities in Lahore that have been accredited by HEC. The method of stratified sampling was applied. A public institution and a private university were chosen. A total of 100 students from public and 100 from private universities were taken into consideration. 200 students made up the sample in total.

Instrumentation

Following a careful analysis of the literature, the researcher created the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was employed to assess university students' leadership abilities. 45 items total, depending on five categories, made up the questionnaire. These were emotional intelligence, communication, problem-solving, vision, and decision-making.

Delimitation

- This study's scope was restricted to

Punjab's public and private universities in Lahore that have received HEC recognition.

- The research study was restricted to graduate and post-graduate students attending Lahore universities.

Analysis and results

Table 1

Level wise comparison

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean opinions	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Vision	Equal variances assumed	3.969	.048	1.166	198	.245	.25000	.21432	-.17265	.67265
	Equal variances not assumed			1.166	192.791	.245	.25000	.21432	-.17272	.67272

With the value $t = 1.166$ (198), $p = .048$ is less than the probability threshold $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating a significant difference between graduate and postgraduate university students' perspectives on the "importance of vision in leadership." The mean score of participants who are postgraduate students and graduates

differs significantly statistically on this criterion, as seen by these data. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no discernible difference between graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on "vision in leadership," is thus rejected.

Table 2

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean opinions	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Decision making	Equal variances assumed	1.181	.278	-.2578	198	.011	-.68000	.26379	1.20019	-.15981
	Equal variances not assumed			-.2578	194.501	.011	-.68000	.26379	1.20025	-.15975

With value $t = -2.578$ (198), $p = .011$, which is lower than probability level $\alpha = 0.05$, the

significance level $p = .011$ (2-tailed) indicates that there is a significant difference between

graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on the "importance of decision-making in leadership." The mean score of participants from private and public universities differs significantly statistically on this factor, as indicated by these numbers. As a

result, the null hypothesis Ho, which states that graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on "decision-making in leadership" do not significantly differ from one another, is rejected.

Table 3
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean opinion s	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
communication	Equal variances assumed	5.398	.021	2.040	198	.043	.74000	.36275	.02466	1.45534
	Equal variances not assumed			2.040	184.579	.043	.74000	.36275	.02434	1.45566

With the value $t = 2.040$ (198), $p = .021$ is less than the probability threshold $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating a significant difference between graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on the "importance of communication in leadership." The mean score of graduates and postgraduate university participants on

this component differs statistically significantly, as seen by these numbers. As a result, the null hypothesis Ho, which states that graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on "communication" differ not appreciably, is rejected.

Table 4
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean opinions	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Problem-solving	Equal variances assumed	1.485	.224	-.751	198	.454	-.35000	.46619	1.26934	.56934
	Equal variances not assumed			-.751	195.487	.454	-.35000	.46619	1.26941	.56941

With the value $t = -.751 (198)$, $p = .224$, which is higher than the probability threshold $\alpha = 0.05$, indicates that there is no significant difference between graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on the "importance of problem-solving in leadership." The mean score of graduate and postgraduate university participants on this factor does not

exhibit a significant statistical difference, according to these values. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_0 , which states that graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on "problem-solving in leadership" are not significantly different, was not successfully rejected.

Table 5
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean opinion s	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Emotional intelligence	Equal variances assumed	4.284	.040	1.461	198	.146	.61000	.41747	-.21325	1.43325
	Equal variances not assumed			1.461	190.267	.146	.61000	.41747	-.21346	1.43346

With value $t = 1.461 (198)$, $p = .040$, which is lower than probability level $\alpha = 0.05$, indicates a significant difference between graduate and postgraduate university students' perspectives on the "importance of emotional intelligence in leadership." The mean score of graduate and postgraduate university participants on this aspect differs significantly statistically, as seen by these numbers. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no discernible difference between graduate and postgraduate university students' opinions on "emotional intelligence in leadership," is therefore rejected.

Discussion and Conclusion

In academic level analysis, the results indicate a significant association. The p-value is 0.048 for vision, 0.011 for decision-making, 0.021 for communication, and 0.040 for emotional intelligence suggesting that there exists a statistically significant difference in vision, decision-making, communication, and emotional intelligence, and the leadership abilities of graduate and postgraduate university participants. In other words, these

factors play a vital role in determining the effectiveness of these students' leadership capabilities. However, in problem-solving where $p = .224$ it does not show a meaningful association with the academic level. It may also reflect that the ability to solve problems may not be an important factor in classifying leaders from non-leaders among graduate and postgraduate students.

The study establishes a categorical (gender-wise and sector-wise) importance of these factors using statistical analysis via SPSS. The results suggest certain aspects of leadership emphasizing the significance of the university environment including educational and co-curricular activities. The study decided that: -

- Students who demonstrate excellence in vision, decision-making, and communication are likely to be good leaders, as indicated by the substantial p-values in these domains.
- The ability to see and solve problems may not be greatly affected by a person's gender.

- Gender-specific characteristics and cultural expectations may have an impact on variables like communication and emotional intelligence.
- The results centre on the possible impact of some external university elements, such as materials, curricula, faculty knowledge, and cultural norms, on students' growth as leaders.
- The significance of problem-solving abilities might differ based on the situation and academic discipline.
- The importance of emotional intelligence is clear: those who are able to comprehend and control their own emotions as well as those of others are better able to form lasting bonds and inspire their peers.

The study confirms the idea that deliberate tactics are required to help students in a university setting cultivate leadership traits.

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