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# Variation in Leadership Styles Based on Gender and School System in Baltistan Region of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

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**Abstract:** *Previous studies show divided views on how female-school-leadership styles differ from their male counterparts in both public and private schools. This survey designed research employed a structured questionnaire to collect data from one hundred (120) headteachers (63 male, 57 female) about their leadership styles practices from elementary schools of the Baltistan region. Schools were selected through stratified (public/private) random sampling from the four districts of Baltistan. Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze data. A statistically significant difference between male (M= 3.131, SD = .896) and females (Mean = 3.667, SD=.922) was found with respect to situational leadership only. Public schools principals practiced more autocratic styles as compared to private school principals. Female school principals were more democratic in both private as well as public schools than male principals. Situational leadership styles were more in practice across gender and the school system.*

**Key Words:** Educational Leadership, School Leadership, School Principals, Autocratic Leadership Styles, Democratic Leadership Styles, Situational Leadership Style

## Introduction

Across the globe, the importance of the role of school leadership has been well recognized. The leadership role is seen to be crucial in terms of supervision (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood, Gu & Brown, 2010). Leadership and leadership roles and functions are seen through various lenses. Leadership effectiveness is also gauged in terms of the styles of leadership and leadership roles in an educational institution (Gyasi, Xi, & Owusu-Ampomah, et al., 2016). Many other researchers found a conspicuous impact of school leaders' style-based supervision on school teachers, staff, and students' performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Oyugi and Gogo (2019) showed that out of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-fair styles of leadership, the democratic leadership styles are more in practice and widely recommendable style.

Bada, Ariffin, & Nordin (2020) indicated well about the complexity of the school principal's role, which is made even more complex by the environment outside and within the institution (Stringer & Hourani, 2016). Hence, school principals have to more cautiously make decisions, which most researchers suggest to be based on facts and data (e.g., Sun, Johnson, & Przybylski, 2016). Ultimately, school principals' role is measured and examined in terms of teachers' capacity building and students' performance (Bada et al., 2020; Stringer & Hurani, 2016).

Various leadership styles are in practice in Pakistan (Naeem, Jamal & Naveed, 2019; Rehman, Khan, & Waheed, 2019; Tatlah, & Iqbal, 2013). Among these leadership styles, the most commonly reported styles are charismatic, transactional, and transformational leadership

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Global Educational Studies Review
GESR

styles (Naeem et al., 2019); democratic, autocratic, lassies-fare (Ch, Ahmed, Malik & Batool, 2017), transformational (Khalil et al., (2016). Rehman et al. (2019) reported on instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and moral leadership styles in the schools of Peshawar. While, Khalil et al. (2016) found transactional style as the most practiced leadership style in the Lahore district. Alam (2012), in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, found democratic leadership being a more practiced style in schools.

Bada, Ariffin, & Nordin (2020) found a statistically significant difference between male and female school leadership practices. Their leadership practices inventory included five elements; (1) Model the way, (2) Inspire a shared vision, (3) Challenge the process, (4) Enable others to act, (5) Encourage the heart. All these models (inventory used by Bada et al. (2020) also seems to be influenced by the leadership approaches to supervision. Given the complexity of the school principal's role of school, a number of factors come under consideration that interacts. Studies report such factors include school culture, , school environment (Kythreotis et al., 2010), school systems seem (Khan et al, 2021).

A recent study by Riasat, Hasmi & Din (2021) mentioned that females are presented as "underprivileged community in Pakistan, though things have changed over the decade" (p. 7835). Begum, Jan & Khan et al. (2013) reported that there is a weak correlation between gender and transformational leadership practices. However the study by Tatlah, & Iqbal (2012) reported a significant difference between male and female headteachers based on their leadership styles both public and private sectors.

Stevenson, Hedberg, O'Sullivan, & Howe, 2016). The inconsistency in the above mentioned studies and the increasing role of female school principals in the last decade makes room for new researches into the role of leadership in schools as quality education is still a burning issue in the country (Pakistan, National Education Policy, 2017). The said document further has re-emphasized on the gender equality and empowerment of women, thus has recently observed an increase in the participation of women in employment, especially in the education sector (Riasat et al., 2021). Hence, the present investigative research has attempted to study gender-orientated variation in leadership styles in the elementary school from the Baltistan region of the administrative province of Gilgit-Balitstan, Pakistan.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:
1. Explore differences in the practices of school headteachers' leadership style between males and female school principals in the Baltistan region of GB, Pakistan.
2. Explore differences in the practices of school headteachers' leadership style for gender and school system for the sub-types of leadership styles in the elementary schools of Baltistan region of GB, Pakistan of Baltistan.
3. Explore differences in the practices of school headteachers' leadership style between males and female school principals in public sector elementary schools of Baltistan region of GB, Pakistan of Baltistan.
4. Explore differences in the practices of school headteachers' leadership style between males and female school principals in private sector elementary school of Baltistan Baltistan region of GB
5. Study the type of leadership style being most practiced by male and female public sectors principals
6. Identify the type of leadership style being most practiced by male and female private sectors secondary school principals

## Literature Review

Most frequent use of the term "Knowledge economy" (e.g., in Government of Pakistan, 2017) and technical and vocational education and other such terminologies, in fact, put constant pressure on education to evolve. The vision and goals by the government of the time have compelled the schools become the grassroots level agents of change. Policies and structures are shaped and reshaped around schools so that the school leaders can cope up with the contemporary challenges. School principals/heads as educational leaders are expected to be more vigilant and in order to develop and transform institutions and their individuals (Khan et al., 2021). The multifaceted expectations from school principals are reshaping even their identities as school principals/heads

and thus giving new meaning to leadership in the newly developing and trending scenarios. Our study literature revolves around these themes, which are presented below:

## Conceptual Evolution of Leadership

From traditional literature, we come to find out a view of leadership as a person having a set of personality traits or characteristics not all were blessed with. This view has changed as leadership has been viewed in terms of functions for which any one can be trained and prepared. However, the modern perspectives defines leadership as a behavior, power relationships among leaders and followers, set of knowledge and skills, group processes and so on (Jago, 1982; Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013). Leadership is thus not associated with a person rather an institution can also play leading role. There is also a trend to see to leadership as "(a) ... a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals" (Northhous, 2019, p. 43). Such definitions imply that a 'leader' in modern day world is the one who is assigned with such functions, with an institution, which involve engaging with the 'followers' to pave way for the achievement of collective goals (Edwards, 2009). Others are influenced through certain behaviors, skills and strong communication, management and valuing individuals and the goals to be attained.

## Relationship between Leadership Functions and Leadership Styles

Giving direction, motivating, and guiding the people towards a common and shared goal are the processes and functions of leadership which are carried out through various approaches. A leadership style is thus a choice of leadership to be more dominant in one style than others or following multiple styles depending on the time, the situation needs thus, based on the nature of functions, the concept of leadership styles are understood as different styles are in fact a certain choice functions over others (Krasikova et al., 2013). The role of leadership styles is considered important in school effectiveness. Various styles are associated with a varying degree of performance of teachers and students in an educational context (Wang, Chiang, Tsai, Lin & Cheng, et al., 2013). Other studies indicated the importance of a particular style and its unique contribution to students' performance.

## Types of Leadership Styles

### Autocratic leadership style

Autocratic style of leadership has its roots in the theory X of McGregor. This theory assumes that people are by nature lazy and avoid using their energy in work especially the work which is repetitive—they are lazy and unwilling until they are forced to do so, thus use of authority becomes an approach/style to influence people and avoid exerting their energy on work on every occasion as they are naturally lazy (Taj et al, 2021).

Studies from psychology, however, seem to be pointing out the dark side of the autocratic styles by pointing out that such a style creates fear and insecurity among the followers and thus they cannot use their energies in the self-motivated manner (Alam, 2017). The autocratic headteacher is criticized for stressing loyalty, obedience, and strict compliance, which damages intrinsic motivation (Krasikova et al., 2013).

## Democratic Leadership style

Democratic leadership styles stand as a polar approach to the autocratic style (Krasikova et al., 2013). Its emphasis is on the inclusion of voices of workers and gives importance to opinions, situations, and working styles. It is so on the belief that such engagements would increase employees' job satisfaction and productivity. Previous studies have shown that in the modern day world workers are more educated and thus are self-responsible and thus can work with equal responsibility as leaders do. Experimental studies point to better results for this style as compared to autocratic (Jago, 1982). Democratic leadership is characterized as consultative, participatory, flexible, and worker-centered (Oyogi & Gogo, 2019). From productivity, motivation, innovation, building strong communication, taking effective decisions, employee's satisfaction on commitment are such factors which have been reported to show a positive relationship with democratic leaders (Dahar, Faize, Niwaz, Hussain & Zaman, 2021).

## Situational Leadership Style

Situational leadership theory explains leadership approach being adaptive to the situation. Autocratic or democratic both may work

depending on the situation and thus an intermittent use of both may yield better results. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1969a) cited in Northouse (2019), this style of leadership has a supporting, guiding, delegating, and directing dimension. The need of a particular dimensions may depend upon the evaluation skills of the leader as how he or she evaluates the situation and available human and material resources to take a decision. A leader's key function is to evaluate the situations, functions and nature of tasks on need basis. In a school context, a headteacher practicing situational leadership style assesses the context of the school, needs, demands, motivation, and culture of a school in which students and teachers interact.

## Relationship between Gender and Leadership Styles

Previous studies have reported that along with so many situational factors, a leader's general role as viewed in society also influences the way they exhibit their functions (Khan, Butt, Faizi, Akbar, & Khattak, 2021). Leadership styles are predicted by age, gender, working experience, educational background, and the type of school in which the leadership works (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982). These predictors may help in deciding how much successful a school is in coping up with the 21$^{st}$-century challenges and the sustainable development of the schools. Those who found no positive correlation also include such gender as a variable their studies (e. g. Beaver, 2011; Chen, 2014; Crain, 2010).

## Theoretical Perspective of the Present Study

Theories of leadership have already explained the three types of leadership styles. The theory X of McGregor explain about the nature of human that they are not willing to work until forced by some external agent. Theories from psychological studies (Krasikova et al., 2013) however emphasize on the opposite side of autocratic style that is the democratic styles. Since these theories have been useful and thus seemed to be at work depending on various situations and conditions thus a situational leadership theory is nothing but a mid-way approach as one can draw from both of the autocratic style theories and democratic style theories.

From the field of psychological and psych-social theories identify distinctive features of females as compared to males thus their social functions are also assumed or expected to be different. In line with the theory of "difference theory" of Gumperz, (1922: as cited in Wikipedia, 2021). Prakash & Flores (1985) theorize that females tend to be different in social relations and empathy. Thus the present study is an attempt to investigate the interaction of leadership styles with gender within and between school systems in the context of Baltistan region of GB, Pakistan with the following conceptualized framework indicating variations on leadership styles based on gender of school leadership. There are a number of research studies internationally and national but there are lack of studies into female's role in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Hence, the inconsistent results of the previously conducted studies and the dearth of literature in the context of the study provide a basis that the subject needs to be further explored for informing policy decision and practice better and more effective.
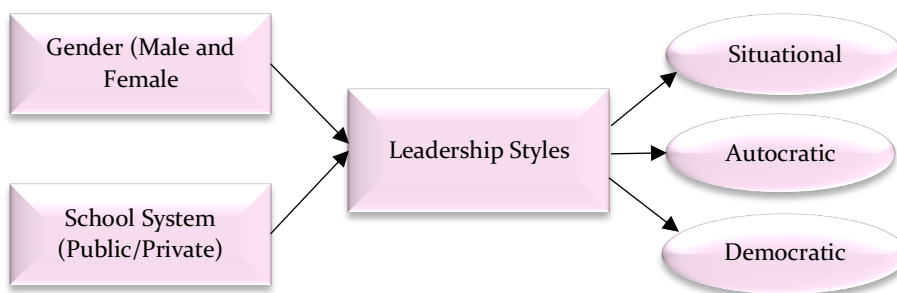


**Figure 1:** Conceptual Frame of the Study

## Methods

This study was an attempt to explore variations in leadership styles practices based on gender and school system in elementary schools of Baltistan. A survey-based quantitative data were obtained using a self-developed questionnaire on leadership styles. Based on previous studies and experiences of researchers, three types of leadership styles were identified which were most relevant in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Gender and school system were added as demographic variables, while the dimensions of leadership styles were measured through five-point Likert scaled items. Respondents responded to each statement by rating from 1 to 5 where in strongly disagree was valued as 1 while strongly agree was valued 5. Since accessibility and availability of principals was a difficult task thus a pre-constructed questionnaire was prepared and handed over to each principal to fill and return as and when they could spare time (however with a possible shortest time). The target population school leadership from the four districts of Baltistan, Gilgit-Baltistan. A sample of around 120 head teachers of elementary school were accessed. Due to scattered schools locations they were divided into four clusters (four School-Districts), then at second stage schools were selected based on stratified random sampling strategy (public and private being the strata). Then, at the third stage gender oriented stratification were made from each stratum of public and private. The actual sample distribution after collecting data has been reported in the analysis section.

The instrument was pilot tested on thirty school principals from Skardu Districs which was supposed to represent as Skardu being the capital city and hub of the whole region of Baltistan. Three PhD faculty examined and rated each item of the questionnaire from highly appropriate to inappropriate. Necessary modifications were made prior to piloting. After collecting the 'piloted' questionnaire, its reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alph. Making sure that each scale had a threshold value of .7 we proceeded our data collection further. After reliability analysis, we conducted factor analysis (PCA) to examine the suitability of our sub-scales measuring the constructs of 'Democratic', 'Autocratic' and Situational leadership styles. Results are presented under Analysis and Results section.

## Data Analysis and Results

### Information about Research Participants

The details of the information about the research participants who actually provided us data in form of filled questionnaire is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Gender Distribution across School System, Qualification and Experience

| Key Characteristics | Males | | Females | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Public | Private | Public | Private | |
| Gender | 33 | 30 | 29 | 28 | 120 |
| Qualification 1: (Academic) | | | | | |
| BA/BSc | 11 | 8 | 15 | 15 | 49 |
| MA/MSC | 22 | 22 | 14 | 13 | 71 |
| Qualification 2: (Professional) | | | | | |
| B. Ed | 15 | 19 | 16 | 17 | 67 |
| M. Ed | 17 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 52 |
| Experience | | | | | |
| 1 to 10 years | 15 | 20 | 09 | 24 | 68 |
| Above 10 years | 18 | 10 | 20 | 04 | 52 |

Table 1 shows that out of 120 headteachers, male headteachers from public were 33; from private sector 30, while females from public sector were 29 and private sector were 28. In total 63 school heads were males both public and private school systems combined; and 57 were females from both public and private combined. From row 2and 3 of Table 1 sample characteristics based on qualification, and experiences distribution. Males are a bit more qualified in public sector as compared to females however they are equally distributed in terms for private sector. From the last row of table 1 experienced based difference is a large. The private sectors females are less experienced as compared to public sector.

## Instrument Validity and Reliability

Based on literature the 20 item questionnaire developed to measure school leadership practices were also tested for inter-item relationships within subscales as we measured three construct with various items. On our scale, we had developed 20 items. The First eight items were intended to measure 'Democratic' attitude practices. Item 9 to 14 (6 items) were intended to measure autocratic attitude to leadership practices; item 15 to 20 measured 'Situational' leadership attitude to leadership practices. We relied on three sources for the validity of our scales: (1) Literature based items identification for the scale(s) (2) PhD faculty reviews: Three PhD faculty reviewed and provided feedback which was incorporated (3) Pilot testing on a random sample of 30 participants (4) Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. We did not find it a large enough sample for factor analysis to further confirm our construct due to time and resource

limitations which we recommend our readers to take into account while using the findings of the study. However reliability for each construct was above .7.

We computed individual items to develop a summed up scale for each construct. Next we examined to check normality as normal distribution is a key assumption for parametric test such as t-test. Next we checked out normality analysis. The skewness and kurtosis were within the acceptable range (Skewness = .4, Kurtosis Being social science data we expected some degree of abnormality however from the values of skweness and Kurtois, we observed an approximately normal distribution (Skewness = .2 to .4 while Kurtosis values ranged 1 to 2].

After an initial analysis for distribution of the research participants/sample, we compared the male and females' leadership style practices mean values (overall leadership). The result is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Gender and School System: Mean difference for leadership Styles

| Leadership | | N | M | SD | t-value | Df | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 63 | 2.780 | .555 | -1.442 | 118 | .152 |
| | Female | 57 | 2.926 | .551 | | | |
| School Sytem | Public | 62 | 2.833 | .676 | -.333 | 99.533 | .035 |
| | Private | 58 | 2.867 | .495 | | | |

*Note. Leven's test of equal variance assumption was violated for School System.*

In table 3 we presented overall means of leadership for both gender and school system in order to address of first research objective. There was no statistical difference for gender (t (118) = -1.442, p= .152). However, females showed greater mean value for leadership style practices. Foe school system we observe statistically significant difference (t (99.533) = -.333, p = .035). Next, we studied the mean differences for sub-scales/dimensions of leadership. See table 4 for the summary of results obtained by a combined independent sample t-statistics.

**Table 4.** Leadership Styles Mean Distribution for Gender & School-System

| Leadership | Males | | Females | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Public | Private | Public | Private |
| Democratic | M = 2.93 | 3.40 | 3.413 | 3.156 |
| | SD =1.03 | .634 | 1.050 | .536 |
| Autocratic | M = 1.77 | 1.71 | 1.821 | 1.583 |
| | SD =.333 | .369 | .358 | .305 |
| Situational | M = 3.199 | 3.43 | 3.718 | 3.614 |
| | SD = .966 | .810 | .963 | .891 |

Table 4 shows the quick look at the scenario based on Mean and SDs values between the leadership sub-scales. Male principals of the private sector show higher mean value for democratic styles.

While females in the public sector more practice democratic styles. The results of the t-test for the significance of mean difference are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** *Mean Differences of Leadership Styles: Gender and School System*

| Gender (IV-1) | | N | M | SD | t-value | Df | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic (DV-1 | Male | 63 | 3.160 | .888 | -.803 | 98 | .423 |
| | Female | 57 | 3.287 | .840 | | | |
| Autocratic (DV-2) | Male | 63 | 1.743 | .351 | .602 | 98 | .548 |
| | Female | 57 | 1.704 | .352 | | | |
| Situational (DV-3) | Male | 63 | 3.313 | .896 | -2.133 | 98 | .035 |
| | Female | 57 | 3.667 | .922 | | | |
| School System (IV-2) | | | | | | | |
| Democratic (DV-1) | Public | 62 | 3.158 | 1.058 | -.823[1] | 98 | .412 |
| | Private | 58 | 3.286 | .597 | | | |
| Autocratic (DV-2) | Public | 62 | 1.793 | .346 | 2.232 | 98 | .028 |
| | Private | 58 | 1.652 | .344 | | | |
| Situational (DV-3) | Public | 62 | 3.442 | .992 | -.481 | 98 | .631 |
| | Private | 58 | 3.523 | .847 | | | |

*Note. Levene's test for "equal variance assumed" was violated only for Democratic under School system.*

Only for situational leadership we found a statistically significant difference between male and female leadership practice (t (118) = -2.133, p = .035<.05)). In the category of School System, Public school leaders are less autocratic as compared to public sectors schools, and the mean difference is statistically significant (t (118) = 2.232, p = .028<.05)).

### Analysis of Mean difference for Gender for Public Schools

Earlier we examined mean values for both male and female with in school system (public and private separately: See table 3). We observed a difference for *Democratic* as well as for *Situational Leadership* thus we extended our analysis to test the difference of mean for its statistical significance using t-statistics (Independent sample t-test) again on the leadership dimensions for only public sector cases. We found that the difference of means of males and females in public sector was significant only on *Situational leadership* (t (60) = -2.112, p = .039). Females had greater mean value.

### Analysis of Mean difference for Gender for Private School

Based on our observation of mean difference we hypothesized that gender might have any effect in the private sector also. Thus we conducted an independent sample t-test once again to see whether there was a significant difference of male and female mean values statistically within the private sector. We found no statistically

significance of the mean difference for democratic (t (56 =1.629, = .109). For private school we also observed no significant difference for the situational leadership styles (t (56) = -.785, p = .107). Females had a greater mean value in each case.

### Discussion

We found that there was no statistical difference for gender for overall leadership scale. However, females show greater mean value. Similar results to our study were reported by Begum et al. (2002) a 'small' difference between genders in terms of transformational leadership style. The mean value for males as 4.13, and for females was 4. 16 as reported in the study. We expected differences as many studies indicate a different situation in terms of working conditions for females sin Pakistani (e. g., Taj, Haidar, & Amin, 2021). The findings of the study of Khan, Rashid, Khan, Qazi, Ahmad, & Ullah, (2021) are incongruent with our findings. On the other hand, Tatlah and Iqbal (2012) reported in their study on 300 head teachers' leadership styles that there was a significant difference in leadership styles in both the public and private sectors. Wang et al. (2013) reported that gender played a moderating role between authoritarian leadership and subordinate outcomes having strong negative relationship ( the outcomes being creativity, task performance, altruism towards colleagues, and conscientiousness). Khan, Butt, Faizi, Akbar, & Khattak, (2021) provide detailed evidence on how females differ. According to their findings, various factors namely traditional perceptions about

women's role at home, in society, in an institution, and their educational background, all have an implication on their role as school leaders (Offermann & Foley (2020).

Another finding in our study was about, school system; we observed statistically significant differences in leadership styles overall. The difference was more evident in Autocratic leadership styles. Public school leadership was more autocratic than private school principals. These findings are supported by many other studies (Anastasiou, & Garametsi, 2021; Raza, Gilani, & Waheed, 2021).

Next we attempted to analyse the difference of means of both *gender* and *school system* for the sub scales of leadership. We observed that only for *situational leadership* we found a statistically significant difference between male and female leadership practice. Begum, et al (2013) found that women are more transformative. Females' leaders also seem to be more adaptive to the situation as compared to males (Riasat, Hashmi, & Din, 2021). We found that for private school none of the sub categories showed any significant difference however mean value for females was higher (3.6) as compared to male (3.4) even in private schools. However, Alam (2017) mentioned private school leaders as more democratic. While we found that situational leadership is most preferred style while autocratic is least reportedly practiced styles in GB context regardless of gender however females are slightly more situational dependent than males. Dahar, Faize, Niwaz, Hussain, & Zaman (2010) found that democratic leadership was being practiced most and had higher degree of positive correlation with students' academic achievement (Cha, et al, 2017). Such findings have more significance as leadership studies suggest that variation in leadership styles is associated with school performance (Talha et al., 2012). Democratic leadership styles are reported to have a higher degree of positive correlation with students' academic achievement (Cha et al., 2017).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Women studies literature shows a number of factors that establish the difference between male and female. A common perception world-wide is that women are under-represented in leadership position; more so in Pakistan. Thus, it was useful to find empirical evidence of the difference in

context of difference between male and female school leadership styles. Thus, our studies makes the following conclusions: (1) there was no statistical difference between male and female in overall leadership styles. However, females show greater mean value for leadership style practices which may have a practical significance. We expected differences as many studies indicate a different situation in terms of working conditions for female sin Pakistani. Thus we could conclude the greater mean value for females has a practical significance as it is supported by many research studies (e. g., Khan et. al, 2021). A significant findings was about school system. We observed statistically significant difference on leadership styles overall between public and private school as we had expected. The difference was more evident in Autocratic leadership styles. Public school leadership were more autocratic than private school principals. We observed that only for *situational leadership* we found a statistically significant difference between male and female leadership practice overall. Females' leaders seem to be more adaptive to the situation as compared to males (Riasat, Hashmi, & Din, 2021). We conclude that situational leadership is most preferred style while autocratic is least reportedly practiced styles in GB context regardless of gender; however, females are slightly more situational dependent than males

Women being in leadership positions can perform equally better as do their male counterparts. We had certain limitations to our study; thus, we recommend more empirical studies. We could not find an appropriate scale measuring leadership styles for the context of GB, which has its own peculiar milieu to be understood and addressed. Although we conducted a study in order to cover the whole region of Sakrdu, there were certain limitations of time and resources also. Furthermore, we could not conduct factor analysis on our scale to further improve our scale, which could be done with a large sample. We relied on the validity of our scale on literature, expert opinion, and pilot testing only. We felt that structured interviews would be more appropriate to obtain reliable data as some of our school principals seemed to have a problem in understanding the concepts involved in our questionnaire statement. In addition, filling questionnaires in the English language also

seemed to be a bit problematic in collecting valid data. We realized it after data collection. Future researchers can further probe into the study with greater care for collecting data through multiple sources and involving a larger sample than our study.

## Authors' Note and Acknowledgement

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