

Leadership in Hierarchy: The Role of Head Teachers in Shaping Organizational Power Distance

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at examining the effect of head teachers' leadership practices on the power distance in the organization of public secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan. The high power distance and downward communication in public schools reflect a centralized bureaucratic structure. A multistage stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data with 1214 respondents (309 head teachers and 905 SSTs) from three districts (Rawalpindi, Sahiwal and Bahawalpur). The instruments used for data collection were standardized instruments, namely the Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (ILQ) and the Power Distance Scale (PDS). Descriptive data, Pearson correlation, simple linear regression, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used for data analysis. Results indicated that there was a moderate, statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -.48, p < .01$) between instructional leadership practices and organizational power distance. Regression analysis showed that leadership practices significantly predicted and contributed to 23% of the variance in organizational power distance ($R^2 = .23, p < .001$). The independent samples t-test revealed no significant difference in teachers' perceptions with regard to gender ($t = 1.42, p = .155$), while one-way ANOVA results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions in terms of geographical districts ($F = 5.14, p = .006$) and professional experience brackets ($F = 6.28, p = .002$). The results indicate that organizational power distance is neither a fixed cultural trait, but a dynamic construct that can be actively reduced by the use of collaborative, participative and context-sensitive leadership behaviors.



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Introduction

Empirical research in recent times has shown that power distance in an organization is not just a cultural phenomenon, but it is also strongly shaped by leadership behavior. For example, employing TLP has shown to improve perceived power distance and foster trust, cooperation, and teacher participation in decision-making processes (Tozlu & Hoşgörür, 2024). Likewise, instructional leadership with a shared learning and professional dialogue theme is correlated with less hierarchical distance and greater teacher engagement. There is evidence that leadership behavior is a key determinant in the increase or decrease of the school's hierarchical gap. For instance, authoritarian leadership can increase power distance through minimizing teachers' involvement, while participative and transformational leadership can decrease perceived power distance and shared ownership of school goals, as described by Mincu (2022).

The education system is highly hierarchical in Pakistan, with authority vested in the federal and provincial education departments, then the district education offices and finally the leadership at the school level. The administration and instruction of public secondary schools in Punjab is operated in this centralized mode with strong administrative and instructional powers given to head teachers. Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) in Punjab have to abide by the directives of the head teachers regarding the teaching schedule, practices in classroom, assessment procedures and discipline at school. While this is necessary for the control of the organization, it can also reduce teacher autonomy and involvement in making decisions.

In recent research carried out in Pakistan, it was recommended that cultural values of respect for authority and high-power distance have a significant impact on the teacher-principal relationship. In many cases, a head teacher is provided with the authority to make decisions, and teachers accept this type of decision-making (Arif et al., 2023; Urooj et al., 2024). However, the fairness, transparency and leadership style of the

head teachers have a significant impact on the teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Khalil, 2021).

Although the importance of school leadership has been highlighted in Pakistan, very little empirical research has investigated how the head teachers affect the organizational power distance in public secondary schools. In the current literature, most studies examine leadership styles, job satisfaction or organizational commitment, and relatively fewer look at the hierarchical perceptions as a result of leadership practice.

Several gaps in the existing research were identified from the literature:

1. Evidence of organizational power distance in Pakistan in the context of schools is limited.
2. There have been few studies that considered the effect of head teachers on the hierarchical perceptions of Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) specifically.
3. Existing literature has been overly focused on the styles of leadership without making direct connections to the power distance in the organization.
4. No province-wide studies using proper multistage random sampling in Punjab is available.

The gaps identified indicate the need to study this issue in a disciplined way to find out the effects of Head Teachers' leadership practices on the power distance in the organizations of Secondary School Teachers in Punjab.

Statement of the Problem

As schools have become more collaborative and participatory, many secondary schools still have rigid hierarchical structures, and head teachers are very influential in establishing authority relations. The distribution of power within an organization can vary from higher to lower levels and can affect communication, decision making, teacher autonomy and the school's effectiveness in such environments.

Yet, there is little knowledge of how head teachers directly influence maintain or diminish power

distance in their secondary school institutions. The study, therefore, aims to understand how head teachers' leadership practices affect organizational power distance in secondary schools and the influence of their leadership on the hierarchical relationships and school culture.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the effect of the leadership style of the head teachers on organizational power distance among the teachers of secondary schools (SSTs) in Punjab.
2. To analyze the relationship between the hierarchical leadership behaviours of head teachers and their perception of power and decision-making in secondary schools.
3. To measure differences across teachers' opinions according to demographic factors (e.g., experience, district, gender).

Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no statistically significant influence of the leadership practices of Head teachers on the power distance of the organizational structure of Secondary School Teachers in Punjab.

H02: Head teachers' perceptions of authority and decision-making in secondary school settings are not significantly impacted by hierarchical leadership behaviors of head teachers.

H03: Teachers' opinions do not differ significantly as a function of demographic characteristics (such as gender, district, and years in the profession).

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to public secondary schools in Punjab and also the male and female head teachers of secondary schools, male and female secondary school teachers (SSTs/SSEs) were selected as the study population for this study.

Review of Related Literature

Recent studies have helped to incorporate more into the understanding of power distance, highlighting that it is not a static cultural part of an organization, but rather a sophisticated creation of organizational practices and leadership behavior. According to studies, leadership styles like transformational leadership and instructional leadership play an important role in decreasing the perceived power distance by fostering collaboration, trust, and active participation among teachers (Tozlu & Hoşgörür, 2024). Transformational leadership, specifically, has been linked with inspiring employees, establishing a vision and commitment, and creating a strong organizational culture, thereby eliminating hierarchy and fostering inclusiveness. Similarly, instructional leadership is about enhancing the processes of teaching and learning by providing professional support and supervision, thus augmenting teacher participation in school improvement programs.

Organizations can be seen to influence the culture and actions of teachers, as empirical evidence suggests leadership practices have direct effects on the culture and action of teachers in school. For instance, transformational leadership is shown to enhance teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, and to lessen the rigidity of the hierarchy in school (Khalil, 2021). Instructional leadership has also been associated with increased communication, greater professional partnership and increased teaching quality. The results indicated that leadership is not only in administrative control but in the creation of a relationship and the establishment of organizational structures in schools.

The educational system in Pakistan is still quite hierarchical and bureaucratic, especially in public schools. Head teachers in Punjab secondary schools have high administrative powers and they are held responsible for carrying out Government policies, handling teachers, discipline and many other things. This structure provides control for the organization but may restrict teacher involvement in decision-making. In Pakistan,

teachers and school leaders are seen as having a high-power distance relationship, a finding that is supported by cultural norms in Pakistan, however, these relationships are highly influenced by the leadership style and perceived fairness (Jamil et al., 2024).

Head teachers have a key role to play in the hierarchical organization of schools through their role in communication, decision-making, and relationship building. Modern studies indicate that the leadership style of head teachers has a significant impact on the way that schools are managed; they can be either hierarchical or collaborative. If leaders encourage shared governance, teacher consultation, and communication, then the perceived power distance is reduced, creating trust, innovation, and engagement of teachers (Bellibaş et al., 2025; Ombao & De Jesus, 2025).

Recent literature also highlights the fact that cultural values play a significant role in the exercise of head teachers' authority in schools. In high powered distance societies, teachers may favor a centralized decision-making process and tolerate formal authority more. In low power-distance cultures, on the other hand, participatory leadership styles foster teachers' autonomy and joint problem-solving. Bellibaş et al. (2025) suggested that effective leadership is the ability to synchronize leadership behaviors with cultural expectations and, at the same time, to encourage inclusive organizational practices. In this sense, it is proposed that head teachers need to be able to contribute to the effectiveness of the organization, both from the perspective of institutional authority and participatory leadership, in the various educational contexts.

New research also points to a link between leadership style and the culture and power structure of the school. Authentic, transformational and servant leaders foster respect and psychological safety, empower teachers, and reduce unnecessary hierarchical barriers. Constructive leadership helps teachers to be involved in school improvement programs, which leads to more job satisfaction and

organizational commitment. Likewise, systematic reviews of school leadership find that collaborative school leadership practices have a positive effect on school performance through fostering better relations between the head teachers and teaching staff, thus mitigating the impact of negative aspects of strict school hierarchies (Abid et al., 2025; Ombao & De Jesus, 2025).

The role of head teachers as cultural architects who influence norms in the organisation beyond the formal role of administrator is increasingly acknowledged in current scholarship. Effective school leaders build emotionally supportive climate that is transparent, fair and based on shared responsibility, not just based on position. Research evidence on school culture shows that emotionally intelligent and collaborative leadership increases trust, cohesion and motivation among teachers, and decreases the sense of excessive authority and social distance. Head teachers who encourage the use of inclusive leadership practices, therefore, play a role in the formation of healthier organizational cultures in which power is used by influencing and collaborating instead of dominating (Plaku & Leka, 2025; Yıldız, 2025).

The leadership within hierarchical educational institutions has a significant impact on organizational power distance construction, maintenance and modification. Head teachers play a pivotal role in establishing roles, communication channels, and decision-making within the school that can have an impact on teachers' understanding of hierarchy. Although hierarchical leadership can help create stability and clarity of roles, it can also create a negative environment for teachers' participation, limit teachers' autonomy and diminish collaborative school culture when the power distance is too high. In today's educational context, a shift in educational leadership from authority-based to participative and learning-based leadership is emphasized, as head teachers need to combine formal leadership with sharing responsibility to achieve organizational effectiveness (Bellibaş et al., 2025).

Empirical research in recent years also shows that leadership effectiveness is not solely related to leadership style, but also to how leaders react to the realities of the context and culture. Head teachers who are practicing "empowering" and "context-sensitive" leadership in schools with high power-distance are more effective in fostering teachers' commitment, trust in the organization and positive school culture than are those who are emphasizing positional authority alone. Context-based leadership, on the other hand, indirectly improves organizational culture through teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which means that it improves the organizational culture by creating organizational accountability and reducing unnecessary hierarchical barriers between the organization and its teachers (Özkul, 2026).

In the same way, recent studies show that empowering leadership fosters collective teacher efficacy and school innovativeness but with some differences depending on the power-distance orientations in an organization (Kavgacı et al., 2026). The results of this study support the notion that leadership should be tailored to the specific organizational culture, and not standardized, in all educational contexts.

The head teachers' role is significant in a highly institutionalized formal authority system, such as is found in centralized educational systems. Instead of using bossy, command-and-control leadership, many of the current studies in leadership suggest that principals build trust, open lines of communication, and shared decision-making. Research shows that school leaders with low levels of institutional autonomy who are active in using an interactive leadership style that encourages collaboration in the presence of structural limitations create better organizational outcomes (Mincu & D'Addio, 2026).

Similarly, the implementation of distributed leadership also fosters innovation and enhances school performance when teachers feel that they can play an active role in school decision-making and are not mere "recipients" of administrative instructions (Zhan & Liu, 2026). Effective head

teachers, therefore, rework the power distance in the organization, shifting the power from control to coordination.

Some contemporary information also emphasizes the need for balance between authority and emotional intelligence and ethical leadership. While hierarchical dominance can foster communication difficulties, stress for teachers and a lack of intrinsic motivation, effective leadership can help to build psychological safety and engagement for teachers. Recent studies have shown that poor leadership or overly authoritarian leadership undermines teachers' motivation by reducing administrative communication and increasing job stress, highlighting the negative impact of authoritarian leadership styles (Üztemur et al., 2026).

Taken together, the literature from the modern era indicates that head teachers have a critical influence in determining organizational power distance by their leadership practices which foster collaboration, shared responsibility, participation and trust. Such leadership fosters a positive school environment as well as a positive impact on sustainable school improvement and better educational results especially in culturally hierarchical education settings.

Research Methodology

This study examined the power distance phenomenon in hierarchical organizations, and how head teachers contribute to this phenomenon. The study is descriptive and correlational as it only examines a phenomenon that has already occurred and has not been manipulated. To establish the relationships and effect of structural disparities among the various groups of the respondents, a cross-sectional quantitative survey research design was used.

Population and Sampling

In this study, the target population was all secondary school heads and secondary school teachers in public government schools of 3 districts in Punjab province of Pakistan. The School Information System (SIS, 2024) reports that there were 8,049 secondary school head

teachers and 38,157 secondary school teachers in total.

To provide geographical and administrative representation, the province of Punjab was segmented into three main areas: North Punjab, Central Punjab and South Punjab. A multistage stratified random sampling was used in the following way:

In stage 1 (Division Level), one administrative division was randomly picked from each of the three strata (Rawalpindi Division (North Punjab), Sahiwal Division (Central Punjab) and Bahawalpur Division (South Punjab)).

Stage 2 (District level): One representative from each of the chosen divisions (Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur districts) was selected as the district representative.

A sample of more than 10% of the participating institutions in these districts was taken at random, as recommended by the sampling guidelines (Chuan & Penyelidikan, 2006) for large-scale surveys.

The distribution of the target population and the final selected sample is shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: District-Wise Target Population Distribution

District	Head Teachers	SST / SSE	Total Target Population
Bahawalpur	85	981	1,066
Sahiwal	105	1,010	1,115
Rawalpindi	135	1,735	1,870
Total	325	3,726	4,051

Source: <https://sis.pesrp.edu.pk/>, 2024

Table 2: District-Wise Sample Distribution

District	Head Teachers (n)	SST / SSE (n)	Total Sample Selected (n)
Bahawalpur	109	256	365
Sahiwal	105	331	436
Rawalpindi	95	318	413
Total	309	905	1,214

Data Collection Instruments

Two adopted standardized questionnaires were used to gather the data on the two main variables:

Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (ILQ): 40 items developed and validated by Akram et al. (2017) to assess the behaviors of head teachers' instructional management and Power Distance Scale (PDS): This scale, also adopted from

Adamovic (2023), comprises 15 items to assess teachers' perception of the power and distribution of authority in the workplace.

Validity and Reliability

Content and face validity of the instruments were checked by a panel of educational experts. The panel found the items very relevant in the context of secondary schools in Pakistan. After expert

validation, a pilot study was carried out with a random sub-sample of 10% of the target population, and this sub-sample was not used in

the final sample analysis. The internal consistency was tested by calculating Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis of Research Tools

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Internal Consistency Status
Power Distance Scale (PDS)	15	.749	Highly Reliable
Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (ILQ)	40	.886	Highly Reliable

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was done using a dual-mode strategy to maximize responses rates. The researcher obtained formal administrative approval from the schools' selected heads of school prior to visiting the schools in person. The researcher explained the research purpose, gave paper-based questionnaires, and helped the participants to fill in the forms on the school visits.

In addition to field collection, electronic versions of the instruments were developed using Google Forms and shared through professional communication platforms such as institutional email, WhatsApp groups and Messenger.

Data Analysis

Data gathered was quantitatively analysed and processed in SPSS. The statistical tools used are: Descriptive Statistics: Summary of demographic data and central tendency/ dispersion of variables of interest. Pearson Correlation indicated the

strength and direction of the linear association between leadership practices and perceived organizational power distance. Inferential Analysis (t-tests & ANOVA) were done to determine differences in teachers' opinions according to baseline demographic factors (e.g., gender, district, years of experience).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was officially approved by the institutional review board and ethical committee of the university. Before executing field procedures, institutional consent was obtained from the participating school administrations. All participating head teachers and secondary teachers signed a formal consent form. The researcher assured all respondents that their participation was completely voluntary, their identity would remain anonymous, and all collected data would strictly be used for academic research purposes.

Results

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Analysis between Leadership Practices and Organizational Power Distance (N = 1,214)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
Instructional Leadership Practices	3.68	.54	—	
Organizational Power Distance	2.85	.62	-.48**	—

Note. **p < .01

To fulfill the first objective which is the impact of head teachers' leadership practices on power distance in an organization, and to test the first

null hypothesis (H01) that stated that head teachers' leadership practices has no statistically significant impact on power distance in the

organization of secondary school teachers in Punjab, the following data were analyzed. Pearson correlation coefficient was performed. The descriptive statistics in table 4 show moderate to high levels of instructional leadership practices ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .54$) and moderate perceptions of organizational power distance ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .62$). A correlation analysis indicated that there

was a moderate, statistically significant negative correlation between leadership practices and organizational power distance, $r = -.48$, $p < .01$. This result shows that the more head teachers adopt the collaborative and instructional leadership behaviors; the lower is the perception of power distance in secondary schools.

Table 5: *Regression Analysis Summary for Leadership Practices Predicting Organizational Power Distance*

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
(Constant)	4.21	.11	—	38.27	<.001
Instructional Leadership	-.36	.03	-.48	-19.14	<.001

Note. $R^2 = .23$; Adjusted $R^2 = .23$; $F(1, 1212) = 366.34$, $p < .001$.

To answer the second objective of this study which was to investigate how the hierarchical leadership behaviors of head teachers influence teachers' perception of authority and decision making in secondary schools, simple linear regression analysis was done and the beta coefficients were evaluated to test the second null hypothesis (H02) which stated that hierarchical leadership behaviors of head teachers have no statistically significant influence on teachers' perception of authority and decision making in secondary schools. Table 5 shows that the regression model was significant and accounted for 23% of the variance ($R^2 = .23$, $F[1, 1212] = 366.34$, $p < .001$) for organizational power

distance. The coefficient is not standardized, and the result is $B = -.36$, $p < .001$, which is a significant and negative predictor for instructional leadership. In addition, the standardized coefficient ($\beta = -.48$, $t = -19.14$, $p < .001$) shows that the hierarchical and leadership practices of head teachers significantly and strongly influence the perception of organizational authority and decision-making systems for teachers. Thus, both the Null Hypotheses (H01 and H02) are accepted, and it is concluded that the leadership practice of head teachers has the effect of actively shaping and decreasing the hierarchical barriers and authority distance in public secondary schools.

Table 6: *Independent Samples t-Test Examining Teachers' Opinions on Organizational Power Distance by Gender (N = 1,214)*

Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Male Teachers	542	2.89	.60	1.42	.155
Female Teachers	672	2.82	.64		

Note. Equal variances assumed. $df = 1212$.

An independent samples t-test was used to examine a part of the third null hypothesis (H03) to determine whether differences exist in teachers' opinion of organizational power distance according to gender. Male teachers rated their score at 2.89 ($SD = .60$) and female teachers rated their score at 2.82 ($SD = .64$) as shown in table 6. However, the results of a t-test showed

that this small difference was not statistically significant, $t(1212) = 1.42$, $p = .155$. Hence, the null hypothesis of the gender is accepted, which shows that male and secondary school teachers have statistically similar perceptions of organizational power distance in public secondary schools.

Table 7: *One-Way ANOVA Comparing Teachers' Opinions across Sampled Districts (Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur)*

District	n	Mean	SD	F	p
Rawalpindi	413	2.78	.59	5.14	.006
Sahiwal	436	2.84	.61		
Bahawalpur	365	2.94	.65		

Note. Between groups df = 2, Within groups df = 1211.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to investigate the difference in teachers' opinions due to district placement and test the corresponding part of the null hypothesis H_{03} . As shown in table 7, teachers from Bahawalpur had the highest mean power distance perception ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .65$), followed by Sahiwal ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .61$) and Rawalpindi ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .59$). ANOVA results showed that there

was a significant difference between the districts, $F(2, 1211) = 5.14$, $p = .006$. Thus, the hypothesis of no difference between the districts is rejected. This implies that there are significant variations across the country and region in teachers' perceptions of organizational power distance in the context of public secondary education in Punjab.

Table 8: *One-Way ANOVA Comparing Teachers' Opinions Based on Professional Experience*

Experience Group	n	Mean	SD	F	p
1–5 Years	280	2.75	.58	6.28	.002
6–15 Years	534	2.83	.61		
16+ Years	400	2.95	.65		

Note. Between groups df = 2, Within groups df = 1211.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a difference between teachers according to years of professional teaching experience and to test the final part of null hypothesis H_{03} . As evident in Table 8, teachers who had 1 to 5 years of experience scored a mean score of 2.75 ($SD = .58$); teachers who had 6 to 15 years scored a mean score of 2.83 ($SD = .61$); and teachers who had 16 years or more of experience scored the highest mean score of 2.95 ($SD = .65$). The ANOVA results showed that there was a significant difference between the experience groups, $F(2, 1211) = 6.28$, $p = .002$. This illustrates that tenure and length of service have significant impacts on teachers' perception of power distance and authority in the workplace.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the impact of leadership practices of head teachers on

organizational power distance of secondary school teachers (SSTs) in public secondary schools of Punjab, Pakistan. The empirical results showed a moderate negative correlation between the variables of instructional leadership practices and organizational power distance ($r = -0.48$, $p < .01$), and regression analysis showed that the variables of instructional leadership practices significantly explain and account for 23% of the variance in the organizational power distance ($R^2 = 0.23$, $F[1, 1212] = 366.34$, $p < .001$). For this reason, both null hypotheses (H_{01} and H_{02}) were rejected. The outcomes are in line with the current educational leadership literature which states that power distance is not an immutable cultural characteristic, but a dynamic construct that is shaped by leadership actions (Tozlu & Hoşgörür, 2024). The head teachers who adopt collaborative, transparent and instructional leadership management styles, effectively overcome interpersonal gaps, and clear the

perception of hierarchical barriers in school organizations (Bellibaş et al., 2025; Ombao & De Jesus, 2025).

Head teachers are found in the centralized and highly bureaucratic educational system of the public sector education in Punjab and enjoy considerable administrative and instructional powers. This organizational structure has traditionally promoted a centralized approach to communication and an authoritarian culture with a strong power distance, resulting in a lack of active engagement in decision-making on the part of teachers (Khalil, 2021). The present study, however, shows that such firm institutional structures can be moderated through proactive leadership practices. Head teachers create professional dialogue, participative decision-making and relational trust, which shift formal hierarchy to coordination instead of authoritarianism (Mincu & D'Addio, 2026; Zhan & Liu, 2026). This is consistent with previous findings that show effective school leaders are cultural architects with regard to their successful management of institutional accountability and empowering, context-sensitive leadership (Özkul, 2026; Plaku & Leka, 2025).

Comparing the teachers' perceptions with regards to the third null hypothesis (H03) no significant difference was found between women and men teachers ($t = 1.42, p = .155$); hence the component was retained. This indicates that male and female secondary teachers encounter and interact with the same structural and cultural authority relations in public schools. However, statistically significant variations were found among districts of sampling ($F = 5.14, p = .006$) and professional experience brackets ($F = 6.28, p = .002$) and the null hypotheses in each of these groups were rejected. Similarly, the perceptions on power distance among teachers were found to be higher in Bahawalpur than in Rawalpindi and Sahiwal indicating regional administrative and cultural differences. In addition, teachers with 16 years or more of experience in the school were found to be more aware of power distance than those with fewer years of experience, perhaps reflecting greater sensitivity to hierarchical differences that

comes with years of experience in the system. The results of this study align with recent studies that have suggested the evaluation of leadership effectiveness and organizational climates need to be done with localized and context-specific systems (Kavgacı et al., 2026; Üztemur et al., 2026).

Conclusion

This study was able to explore the role of head teachers in the development of organizational power distance in public secondary schools of Punjab in line with its main goals of the study. As for the first goal about the impact of leadership practices, the results showed that head teachers' instructional leadership practices and collaborative leadership practices significantly and moderately negatively influence organizational power distance indicating that head teachers' proactive leadership positively affects organizational power distance.

To the second goal, perceptions of authority and decision-making, the regression analyses found that head teachers' leadership behaviors have a direct and powerful effect on both the psychological and structural perceptions of authority and involvement in school-level decision-making processes.

With regard to the third objective, which examined variance according to demographic features, the findings showed that gender did not introduce any significant differences in teachers' perceptions; however, there were significant differences in teachers' perceptions of hierarchical structures depending on geographical district placement, and length of professional teaching experience.

Finally, the results confirm that power distance in organizations is not a given cultural characteristic. In light of these realities, educators' educational policy makers and school leaders must shift away from a command and control approach and embrace a context sensitive, collaborative approach to leadership within centralized education systems that empowers teachers and creates healthier school environments.

Recommendations

The empirical findings and conclusions of this study on leadership practices and organizational power distance in public secondary schools have generated the following recommendations for the policymakers, educational administrators and head teachers. Excessive power distance must be actively eliminated by changing from rigid, authoritarian management approaches to collaborative, instructional and empowering approaches by educational policymakers and school leaders. For this, the teacher training institutions and the School Education Department should develop special training courses on emotional intelligence, transparency and common decision-making to train head teachers to build collaborative school cultures. In addition, given that teachers' perceptions of hierarchy vary according to their length of service, and according to regional district, educational policies should be flexible and context sensitive, rather than a one-size-fits-all. Lastly, establish opportunities for professional conversations and decision-making that are inclusive, so that Secondary School Teachers are not viewed as recipients but valued partners.

Suggestions for Future Research

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1. The study's cross-sectional nature could be overcome by future research using a longitudinal research design to see how the dynamic of head teachers' leadership styles affects the power distance of an organization over time.
 2. Researchers should extend the geographical scope of the study, beyond the Punjab province to cover public secondary schools of other provinces of Pakistan and make generalizations and cross cultural and cross regional comparisons within the national educational process.
 3. Some follow-up qualitative or mixed research such as in-depth interviews, classroom observation etc., could be carried out to get the nuances and lived experiences of teachers on authority, institutional limitations and workplace communication.
 4. Other school-level factors such as school climate, teacher self-efficacy, psychological safety, and job satisfaction could be analyzed as moderators or mediators of between power distance and school performance and educational outcomes that would help better understand the impact of power distance on the overall school performance and educational outcomes.
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