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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERSEVERANCE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract
This research aimed at examining the association between emotional intelligence and perseverance in secondary school heads in District Gujrat, Pakistan. A quantitative correlational research design was adopted where a population of 325 government secondary school heads was used to select a random sample of 200 male and 200 female head teachers. The emotional intelligence and perseverance measures were measured using self-developed instruments, and both scales had satisfactory reliability and validity. Analysis of data was done on descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The results showed that the secondary school heads display moderate to high emotional intelligence and perseverance. Emotional intelligence and perseverance showed strong positive correlation which implies that leaders who have a higher emotional intelligence have better chances of perseverance when pursuing long term goals. There was a somewhat stronger correlation among female heads as well. These findings highlight the roles of emotional intelligence cin in promoting perseverance and successful leadership in learning environments. It is suggested to boost emotional intelligence and persistence of school leaders with the help of professional development programs, mentorship, and policy interventions.

CORRELATIONAL STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership is critical in determining the overall performance of schools because leaders determine the learning climate, the motivation of teachers and student performance (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). The school leaders have to cope with irresistible challenges in the modern context of education which is growing more and more complicated requiring resilience and adaptability as well as a good command of interpersonal skills. Good leaders must not only be able to make strategic decisions but also be able to persevere in cases of failure. Such traits tend to be based on emotional intelligence and persistence, which are two dimensions that are increasingly being studied in the literature of education (Goleman, 1998; Duckworth et al., 2007).

Emotional intelligence (EI) can be defined as the capacity to sense, interpret, manage and apply the emotions in oneself and in others (Salovey and

Mayer, 1990). When applied to leadership, EI helps one to establish positive relationships, overcome stress, conflict resolution and influence others to pursue shared causes. More highly EI leaders tend to be more prepared to manage the emotional difficulties of a school environment, including staff concerns, meeting the needs of students, and communicating with the parents and the communities (Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey, 2016). Therefore, it is generally accepted that EI is one of the most important elements of effective leadership within organizations and schools.

Perseverance, as opposed to that, is the human ability to maintain energy and interest in the long run despite the obstacles and setbacks (Duckworth et al., 2007). It is directly connected to the idea of the so-called grit, which focuses on the persistence and passion in the long term objectives. Perseverance is especially important in educational leadership, since school heads usually face bureaucratic obstacles, resource shortages and resistance to change. Persevering leaders would have a better chance of instituting reforms, teacher growth, and high performance standards despite the difficulties (Credé, Tynan, and Harms, 2017).

The intersection of emotional intelligence and perseverance presents an important area of inquiry for educational leadership. Emotional intelligence is a factor of persistence in that it allows leaders to manage feelings of frustration, keep them motivated and direct their emotion to long-term objectives (Schutte and Malouff, 2011). To illustrate it, a school leader who possesses a good EI will be able to overcome emotional failures and stay dedicated to the long-term programs. On the other hand, perseverance strengthens the use of EI in that, the strategies of being emotionally intelligent, are used in time. Although this is a theoretical connection, empirical research on the combined effect of EI and perseverance in school leadership is still scarce especially in developing nations like Pakistan.

In the Pakistani educational setting, leadership in secondary schools is associated with enormous challenges such as lack of resources, excessive workload of teachers, political demands, and the necessity to keep up with the fast-changing educational policies (Munir et al., 2025). Such circumstances require perseverance as the key to continually remaining an effective leader and EI to be as important when working with people and keeping the morale of both the staff and students. The current study will fill a crucial research gap by examining the relationship between EI and perseverance in educational leadership and providing the information that can help the improvement of the leadership development program in Pakistan and elsewhere.

The importance of the study is that it has the potential to point out the psychological and emotional competencies which are the foundation of effective leadership. Classical studies of leadership have had the tendency to focus on management skills, teaching methods and decision-making. Nevertheless, the accumulating amount of evidence indicates that individual qualities, including emotional intelligence and perseverance, are just as important in guaranteeing effective sustainable leadership (Boyatzis, 2018). With the constructs in question, the study will help build a more comprehensive picture of leadership in education.

Besides, this study has some practical implications in terms of leadership training and professional development. Determining the correlation existing between EI and perseverance will inform the development of training programs that will strengthen the emotional abilities and robustness of the leaders. Through such initiatives, school leaders have the chance to acquire the required skills to address stress, motivate employees, and stay relentless towards accomplishing the long-term educational objectives. Finally, reinforcement of these individual qualities would help promote positive school cultures, enhance teacher well-being and increase student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

The leaders in secondary schools have complicated tasks to deal with the numerous stakeholders, introduce reforms, and maintain

school improvement with limited resources. Such demands do not only demand technical and managerial skills but also psychological strengths such as emotional intelligence and perseverance. Whereas emotional intelligence assists leaders to manage the emotions, develop relations, and stress, perseverance would aid them to stay dedicated and strong in achieving long-term objectives. Although they are critical, the connection between emotional intelligence and perseverance in educational leadership has not been studied extensively especially regarding the Pakistani context where leadership training has put greater emphasis on administrative skills. This gap underscores the need to study the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing perseverance among leaders of schools at the secondary school level, hence making the leadership practices more effective and sustainable.

Research Objectives

A. To determine the degree of emotional intelligence amongst secondary school leaders.
B. To find out the degree of perseverance of leaders in secondary schools.
C. To explore relationship between emotional intelligence and perseverance in educational leadership.

Research Questions

A. What is the level of emotional intelligence of the secondary school leaders?
B. How persevering are school leaders in the secondary schools?
C. Does Emotional Intelligence have a relationship with perseverance within educational leadership?

Review of Literature

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a concept that has been originally defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) to describe the capacity to recognize, comprehend, control, and utilize emotions as an individual and others. In the last 30 years, EI has become known as a key indicator of effective leadership and particularly in social and educational environments where its interpersonal interaction is of priority. Goleman (1998) postulates that EI has five predominant elements, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These aspects make leaders control their emotions, comprehend emotions of other people and create positive relationships.

EI also plays a significant role in educational leadership since school leaders can inspire learning by showing an example of what to do, mentoring, and guiding others as well as being administrators. Mayer et al. (2016) believe that EI equips leaders with emotional and social skills to resolve conflicts, inspire employees, and create teamwork conditions. It was found that the emotional intelligent leaders are able to improve teacher job satisfaction, workplace stress, and learning school climates that encourage innovation (Selisko, 2024). Indicatively, as it was revealed by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), both teacher commitment and student achievement positively respond to transformational school leaders who are shown to exhibit empathy and relational sensitivity.

In addition, EI assists leaders to manage external demands like communal anticipations, changes in policies, and accountability. Bouchard (2019) note that leaders in education who possess a high level of EI can easily handle stressors, react positively to criticisms, and be resilient during periods of organisational change. Therefore, EI has emerged as a part of the success of leadership models in education systems all over the world.

Perseverance, which has been widely talked about in the context of the term grit, can be described as the continuing drive and interest in long term objectives in the face of adversities, challenges and disappointments (Duckworth et al., 2007). Perseverance is more about continuity in effort over a period of time, in contrast to simple persistence which would focus on how slow or challenging the progress may seem. Persevering leaders are characterized by long-term vision, goal-commitment, and persistence in their quest even when the chips are down (Credé et al., 2017).

Perseverance in education takes the form of a leader being able to sustain reforms, enhance

instructional practices and retain morale amidst challenges of limited resources, staff turnover and changing policy environments. Day and Gu (2014) believe that perseverance is one of the key attributes of the so-called resilient leadership, thanks to which school leaders can afford to strike the right balance between accountability and innovation. Likewise, Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) argue that perseverance belongs to the psychological capital of a leader, which consists of optimism, hope, and resilience, which are essential to successful and long-lasting leadership.

Also, research points out that perseverance does not only help in making an effective leader but also in the stability of an organization. Schools that have perseverance in their principal or head have a better chance of enjoying consistency in improving instruction and cultural transformation (Bush, 2020). Moreover, resilient leaders have the potential to provide a model to other teachers and students to show that perseverance, dedication, and hard work are key components of accomplishing both academic and personal objectives.

Although the concept of EI and perseverance is commonly examined individually, there is an emerging trend of recognising the two as interrelated. EI helps a leader to control his/her emotions, motivation, and stress- all of which are key determinants of perseverance. Schutte and Malouff (2011) discovered that higher EI people are more enduring and tenacious in the pursuit of goals and this is mostly due to the fact that they are able to withstand frustration and disappointments. Conversely, leaders who have low EI might not manage stress or anger, as a result they become burnt out and show no perseverance.

EI in the leadership setup enables a leader to have perseverance due to the ability of the leader to regulate emotions. To illustrate this, a school leader who meets opposition to reform can get frustrated, yet with a high EI, a leader can reframe problems, skillfully handle interpersonal discord, and be determined (Mayer et al., 2016). In this manner, EI also serves to mitigate stress and discouragement by helping leaders remain persevering in the long term.

In addition, perseverance in itself can help strengthen EI by allowing leaders to become more patient, empathetic, and self-contained due to the challenges that they go through in real life. Combined, EI and perseverance create a vicious cycle that benefits the effectiveness of leadership. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of empirical studies explicitly addressing these two constructs in the context of educational leadership, which makes the research studies that would examine the contribution of the two constructs to school outcomes necessary (Bush, 2020).

Pakistan is a country with unique challenges in educational leadership, among them being the problem of resource scarcity, congestion in classrooms, poor infrastructure, and the effects of sociopolitical factors. Little support and high performance are aspects that school leaders are usually expected to operate in and thus they have to demonstrate emotional intelligence and perseverance (Ali et al., 2017). In those situations, the leaders have to deal with a variety of stakeholders such as parents, teachers, policymakers and encourage students to perform despite the barriers of the system.

Wijesingha & Robson (2022) point out that in Pakistan, the development of leadership has been more oriented on administrative and managerial skills, and a few socio-emotional skills have been given more attention. Such a disconnect highlights the need to include EI in leadership training courses. Also, tenacity is especially important in Pakistani environment where change can be resisted, changes in policy are common, and long-term educational change may be hard to maintain due to socio-cultural factors.

It is in light of these realities that little research has been done in Pakistan to test the psychological and emotional competencies of educational leaders. The focus of most studies is on structural or policy views of leadership and not the personal qualities- EI and perseverance potential- that can keep leaders in challenging conditions afloat. The discussion of this gap can lead to better leadership development programs and educational results in the country.

Though EI and perseverance are well established constructs, the role of interrelationship between the two in educational leadership has limited empirical studies. The majority of the studies either center on EI as the predictor of the effectiveness of leadership (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2016) or perseverance as the predictor of long-term success and resilience (Duckworth et al., 2007; Credé et al., 2017). There is a lack of studies that combine these constructs to investigate the role that EI can play in facilitating perseverance especially in some leadership careers that require long-term dedication.

Further, in less developed nations like Pakistan, where leaders are limited by resources and systems, learning how EI and perseverance interact may offer useful lessons in the training of leaders as well as reforming the policies. Such studies might help inform the creation of professional development programs that develop not only emotional competencies but also psychological resilience, which will result in the creation of leaders who will be better positioned to navigate schools through difficult times and maintain educational change with significant value.

Research Methodology

In this study, a quantitative research design is a correlational study that was used to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and perseverance in secondary school heads. All government secondary school heads in District Gujrat in Pakistan were used as the target population (N = 325). A random sample of 200 head teachers was taken out of this population and male and female leaders were equally represented to enable gender-based comparison. Participants also had to be actively serving, in administrative and leadership positions, and no temporary or acting heads were eligible as inclusion criteria. The sample size selected was considered adequate to conduct the correlational and regression analyses because larger sample sizes increase the statistical power, reduce sampling error and also increase the generalizability of the findings (Cohen, 1992). This methodological approach gave a credible foundation to investigate whether emotional intelligence can be used as a predictor of perseverance to educational leadership.

Instrumentation

Emotional intelligence and perseverance among the heads of secondary schools were measured by two self-developed instruments. The Emotional Intelligence Scale (28 items) measures four areas, including self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness and relationship management. Persistence of effort and consistency of goal pursuit was assessed using the Perseverance Scale (20 items). Both tests were done on a five-point Likert scale between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). Expert validation by five experts in the field of educational leadership and psychology ensured content validity and pilot-tested on 30 head teachers, validity and usability. The analysis of reliability indicated that the values of Cronbach alpha exceeded 0.70, which is acceptable internal consistency. These were therefore deemed to be valid and reliable in determining emotional intelligence and perseverance in the study scenario.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed with the help of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS, version 26). Means, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated to describe the answers of the participants with regards to emotional intelligence and perseverance. Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized to test the correlation between the two variables and independent samples t-tests were used to compare male and female heads. The level of significance was established at $p < 0.05$, in order to ascertain the statistical reliability.

Table 1: Level of Emotional Intelligence among Secondary Schools Heads

Variable	Gender	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Intelligence	Male	100	2.87	4.80	3.4240	.55685
	Female	100	1.53	4.73	3.3213	.54139
	Overall	200	1.53	4.80	3.3727	.55020

The findings show that emotionally intelligent (M = 3.37, SD = 0.55) was moderate to high among the heads of secondary schools. Male heads indicated a little more of the mean score (M = 3.42, SD = 0.56) than female heads (M = 3.32, SD = 0.54). The highest and lowest scores were 1.53 to 4.80, with the participants differing in the levels of emotional intelligence. Despite the fact that male heads were marginally more emotionally intelligent, the difference between male and female leaders was comparatively low, which indicates that both provided relatively similar emotional intelligence levels in their leadership practices.

Table 2: Level of Perseverance among Secondary Schools Heads

Variable	Gender	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perseverance	Male	100	2.33	4.20	3.0707	.38230
	Female	100	1.20	4.20	3.0867	.41741
	Overall	200	1.20	4.20	3.0787	.39932

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The results demonstrate that the perseverance of secondary school heads was moderate in general (M = 3.08, SD = 0.40). The mean of male heads was 3.07 (SD = 0.38) whereas females had a mean of 3.09 (SD = 0.42). The scores were between 1.20 and 4.20 which meant that there was a variation in the levels of perseverance among the respondents. The variation between the heads of the male and female is very low implying that the male and female gender are very similar in terms of perseverance in the educational leadership.

Table 3: Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Perseverance in Secondary School Leadership (N=200)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Emotional Intelligence	3.3727	.55020	1	.733**
2. Perseverance	3.0787	.39932	.733**	1

The findings reveal that there is a positive strong correlation of emotional intelligence with perseverance among heads of secondary schools ($r = 0.733$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that more emotional intelligence leads to increased perseverance in the leadership positions. The mean scores indicate that participants on the average had moderately high level of emotional intelligence ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.55$) and moderate level of perseverance ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.40$). The strong relationship suggests that leaders who are more effective in identifying, empathizing, and regulating emotions are more persistent in the achievement of long-term objectives despite the obstacles.

Table 4: Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Perseverance in Male Secondary School Leadership (N=100)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Emotional Intelligence	3.4240	.55685	1	.689**
2. Perseverance	3.0707	.38230	.689**	1

According to the results, emotional intelligence and perseverance have a strong positive correlation among male secondary school heads ($r = 0.689$, $p < 0.01$). The reported mean emotional intelligence of male heads was 3.42 ($SD = 0.56$), and the reported mean perseverance was 3.07 ($SD = 0.38$). This implies that male leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence have high chances of exhibiting increased perseverance in their leadership capacity. The correlation is significant indicating that emotional intelligence is significant in livening persistence and continued effort among male school heads.

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Table 5: Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Perseverance in Female Secondary School Leadership (N=100)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Emotional Intelligence	3.3213	.54139	1	.787**
2. Perseverance	3.0867	.41741	.787**	1

These findings suggest that emotional intelligence and perseverance are highly positive with female heads of the secondary schools ($r = 0.787$, $p < 0.01$). The emotional intelligence score and perseverance score of female heads were 3.32 ($SD = 0.54$) and 3.09 ($SD = 0.42$) respectively. This implies that female leaders who possess a high emotional intelligence have a higher chance of being more perseverant in their leadership capacity. This correlation is a bit higher than the one between the male heads which indicates the significant role of emotion intelligence in perpetuating the approach and goal-oriented behavior in female school leaders.

Conclusions

The research finds that secondary school heads are positively related with emotional intelligence and perseverance. The levels of emotional intelligence and perseverance were moderate to high in both male and female leaders, but were somewhat more strongly correlated between the two variables in female heads. The results show

that the more leaders can perceive, understand, and handle emotions, the more likely they will continue to pursue long-term goals and surmount the challenges in their professional leadership as educators. Generally, emotional intelligence can be acquired as a predictor of perseverance and, therefore, it is indicated to be important in school leadership.

Discussion

The results of the current research reveal that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and perseverance among the heads of secondary schools, which means that a skillful leader to identify, comprehend, and control emotions has a higher chance of maintaining the long-term goal accomplishments. This aligns with the previous studies that emotional intelligence correlates positively with self-control, drive, and endurance, which consequently lead to ongoing effort and achievement of objectives in a leadership position (Goleman, 1998; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). The correlation between female heads is a bit stronger and this fact is supported by the fact that women tend to have higher emotional awareness and interpersonal sensitivity that can help them in becoming more perseverant in problematic situations (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). These results support the theoretical point of view according to which emotional intelligence is not only the key to successful decision-making and relationship management, but it is also a critical factor in developing determination and persistence in an educational leadership situation. In addition, the findings also indicate that any intervention that would help improve emotional intelligence may possibly enhance perseverance among school leaders with improved organizational results and improved leadership in helping the staff and the students (Bar-On, 2006; Petrides, 2011).

Recommendations

Professional development programs should be developed by educational authorities to improve emotional intelligence of secondary school heads because it directly relates to perseverance and good leadership. Mentorship and coaching on emotional regulation, stress management, and goal-setting should be given to school leaders to enhance their persistence in leadership activities. Evaluation of emotional intelligence can be one of the aspects of the selection process of school heads that can be considered by policy makers, to make sure that leaders have skills needed to maintain long-term commitment and resilience. Next research may be conducted on the effect of emotional intelligence training on perseverance and school performance, such as student achievement and teacher satisfaction, over the long-term to gain evidence-based suggestions concerning educational leadership practices.

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