

A STUDY OF PROBLEMS FACED BY FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL HEAD TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study identified the problems of female headteachers in promoting the quality of secondary education. It employed a descriptive survey design. The data was collected from 15 female secondary school headteachers through a piloted (five-point rating scale) questionnaire. The data was analyzed in descriptive form i.e. percentage and presented in tabular form. This study concludes that female secondary school head teachers face different problems in promoting the quality of education. They face infrastructure-related and financial problems along with undue political, ethnic, and departmental pressure; conflicts and association of teachers in the schools and male domination (social problems like stigmatizing) in the society. Therefore, suitable measures may be taken to address the issue for the cause of quality education.

Keywords: *Quality of Education, Head Teacher, Secondary Education, Instructional Material, Quality Assurance, Curriculum, Political Pressure*

INTRODUCTION

Headship of a secondary school is often regarded as instructional leadership and is a prestigious and well-reputed administrative cum academic position in the school education system. The head plays an important role in maintaining proper coordination among schoolteachers and staff; implementation of curricula, planning and organizing co-curricular activities, proper management of resources, monitoring and evaluation along with personnel management and general administration of the school. A school head as an instructional leader owes an important responsibility in dealing with school matters. His/her tasks include supervising, monitoring, and evaluating educational practices in the school and inspiring teachers developing the scholarship of teaching (Maden, 2001).

In schools, quality assurance demands dedication and commitment of headteachers who can devote considerable time for coordination of

activities and management and monitoring of the instructional process. According to Peters and Waterman (1988), committed headteachers continuously visit classrooms to ensure the teaching-learning process. Similarly, schools' headship as instructional leadership seems to be a shared responsibility that promotes commitment and collegial attitude among the staff. Effective school headship establishes a learning atmosphere with clearly defined goals of the school and concentrates on available resources and activities; implements feasible time-table, evaluates lesson plans and teachers' dairies, observes classroom instruction, continuously monitors students' progress, provides feedback on the progress of students, inspires teachers to enhance their efficiency, provides reinforcement to students for their excellence in performance, keeps an eye on maintenance and appropriate use of physical facilities, enforces discipline in the school to ensure a peaceful environment, values capacity building of teachers and ensures such infrastructure necessary for quality education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Pakistan, secondary education is regarded as an important stage in the academic career of a student. It is the first level of formal recognition and formally it awards certificates to the graduates. Formally, it the first step towards further education. Apparently, in Pakistan, the graduates of secondary education seem to be physically developing, psychologically adolescents and socially adults who are expected to assume their social responsibilities (Simkins, Garret, Memon and Nazirali, 2007; Hussain, 2014). Therefore, at this stage of learning, education imparted to them prepares them live and work with confidence in a more productive way. However, the role of a female secondary school headteacher seems to be more challenging in Pakistan which is a male-dominated society; and where only 48% of the females are literate (the overall literacy rate is 58%); whereas, they compose half of the total population of the country (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Generally, female secondary school headteachers appear to be facing a lot of problems of different nature in maintaining and promoting the quality of education.

Different studies have described such problems in different ways and styles. Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Iqbal, Ali and Badshah (2013) highlighted general problems related to secondary education in Pakistani context and listed financial problems, political interference, lack of social recognition and less salaries, accommodation problems, frequent transfer, lack of professional development, poor human relationships or personality clashes,

community pressure, teachers' politics, lack of physical facilities & learning resources, more teaching work in unrealistic working conditions, poor supervision, lack of communication and coordination among headteachers and teachers and other staff members, and textbook and curriculum issues. According to the secondary education in Pakistan faces an acute shortage of financial support, motivation and commitment which seems to be affecting the quality of education at secondary level throughout the county. Similarly, some other studies (Zafar, 2003; Shahzadi, 2002; Shah, 2003; Rehman, 2002; Hussain, 2001; Khan, 1980; Khalid, 1998; Malik, 1991; Saleem, 2002; Qureshi, 2002; Rasheed, 2004; and Hoodbhoy, 1998) and government reports and policies (Government of Punjab, 2004; Government of Pakistan, 2001; Government of Punjab, 2002; Government of Pakistan, 1998; British Council, 1988) also demonstrated more or less alike problems.

In their study conducted to explore administrative issues in secondary schools; Hameed-ur-Rehman and Begum (2013) described some common problems which affect the quality of education in secondary schools. Amongst others, the evaluation process, absenteeism of teachers, political influence, and lack of coordination among stakeholders appeared to be the most obvious problems which have serious effects on the quality of secondary education. However, Suleman, Hussain, Butt, and Ahmad (2012) found a lack of basic facilities in secondary schools, overcrowded classrooms and financial constraints negatively affecting the performance of teachers which consequently hinders the quality of education. In his study, Suleman (2015) concluded that newly appointed secondary school headteachers face more administrative problems than their experienced fellows. Likewise, the study of Simkins, Garret, Memon and Nazirali (1997) reported that the implementation of prescribed curricula is the main problem for headteachers and suggested headteachers to have performance efficacy orientation. These problems are generally faced by female secondary school headteachers in the smooth functioning of their schools. Even so, in some cases, these appear with greater intensity and require a tactful administration.

Hungi and Thuku, (2010) reported behavioural problems of secondary school students and their teachers which significantly appeared to have affected the learning of students and their achievement in Africa. In a study, Juma, Simatwa and Ayodo (2016) examined stress-causing factors among female principles (headteachers) of public secondary schools in Kenya and affirmed that "*role conflict, lack of career development opportunities, lack*

of privacy, political interference, increased participatory management, increased use of ICT, lack of office space, sexual harassment, and inadequate support from stakeholders, poor communication and lack of opportunity for promotion had a moderate influence on female principals stress” (p.52) which harm their quest for quality of secondary education. Similarly, Okudi (2016) identified inadequate training opportunities for senior female [head] teachers as a hindrance to quality education.

Nzeli (2013) found insufficient school funds and lack of training opportunities along with cultural and social issues that affected school management tasks of female secondary school headteachers. However, they appeared performing better than their counterparts in implementation of policies, rules, and regulation. In Nairobi and Kamau (2004) found that female secondary school headteachers faced problems of gender and workplace insecurity. The conflict between conventional and leadership/administrative roles of female headteachers appeared to be the major challenges in the administration of secondary schools. Results of the study of Makura (2014) showed factors like culture and personalities of female headteachers as challenges to their effectiveness in their school administration task.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study focused on identifying the problems of female headteachers in promoting the quality of secondary education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used by the researchers in this study. This design was deemed suitable for this study as it identified problems of female secondary school headteachers through data collection from the respective respondents to conclude. It was a small scale study and it was delimited to the female secondary schools of Bahawalpur District in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. Its population consisted of female secondary school headteachers as they are figure-head and directly involved in the quality of secondary education.

There were 69 female secondary schools in District Bahawalpur which consist of five tehsils. Fifteen (15) female secondary schools (three from each tehsil) were selected conveniently by the researchers for data collection. As it was a small scale self-sponsored study; therefore, these schools were selected by using a purposive-cum-convenient sampling technique. As it was

a descriptive study, a questionnaire (five-point rating/ Likert scale) was considered an appropriate tool and the researchers used it. The questionnaire consisted of three main constructs or areas of (material or infrastructure, financial or funds or money, stakeholders or teachers, staff, parents & community or personnel) problems faced by headteachers which were taken down during literature review. The tool consisted of closed-ended items. It was piloted in two female secondary schools. The construct validity was checked in the light of pilot results. The tool was improved and finalized.

The Principal personally collected data by administering the finalized version of the tool on fifteen female secondary school headteachers. Principal contacted the respondents and explained to them the objectives of the study with an assurance of confidentiality of their provided information. The response rate was a hundred per cent as all of the fifteen questionnaires were complete in all respects. The data were analysed through MS Excel in descriptive form i.e. percentage which is presented in tabular form.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The collected data was analysed in terms of percentage and is presented in tabular form below.

Table1. The opinion of female secondary school headteachers about their problems regarding school infrastructure

Statement/ Theme	Level of Agreement				
	Frequencies & Percentages (given in parentheses below)				
	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA
Female headteacher face problems because of					
Lack of classrooms	12 (80)	2 (13.33)	00	1(6.66)	00
Lack of instructional materials	14 (93.33)	1 (6.66)	00	00	00
Boundary wall	4 (26.66)	6 (40)	00	3 (20)	2 (13.33)
Less number of washroom	10 (66.66)	4 (26.88)	00	1 (6.66)	00
Lack of laboratory items	11 (73.33)	4 (26.66)	00	00	00
Lack of proper library room	8 (53.33)	5 (33.33)	00	1 (6.66)	1 (6.66)
Lack of books in the library	12 (80)	3 (20)	00	00	00
Lack of IT facility & equipment	6 (40)	5 (33.33)	00	3 (20)	1 (6.66)
Average	9.6 (64)	3.75 (25)	00	1.12 (7.5)	0.5 (3.33)

Table-1 demonstrates the opinion of female secondary school headteachers about the problems which they face in promoting quality of education due to insufficient infrastructure. According to the table, 93% of the female headteachers were of the view that they faced problems of an inadequate number of classrooms and all of them (100%) revealed the problem of lack

of instructional materials including simple as well as modern audio-visual aids. Similarly, two-third (67%) reflected that they faced problems because of inappropriate boundary wall; whereas 93% described that their schools have inadequate washroom's facilities for students according to their strength. Even so, all (100%) of the female headteachers described that their school were facing problems of lack of laboratory items for science experiments. However, 86.66% and 100% of them reported the problem of lack of proper library room and books in the library respectively for the student. Likewise, 73.33% of the respondents faced problems of lack of information technology equipment and facility for students and teachers. In overall 89% of the female secondary school, headteachers faced problems because of lack of infrastructure in their schools which hinders the quality of education.

Table 2. The opinion of female secondary school teachers about their budget-related problems

Statement/ Theme	Level of Agreement				
	Frequencies & Percentages (given in parentheses below)				
	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA
Female headteachers face problems due to					
Insufficient non-salary budget	7 (46.66)	5 (33.33)	00	2 (13.33)	1 (6.66)
Delay in releasing non-salary budget	11 (73.33)	4 (26.66)	00	00	00
Process of the utilization of the budget	7 (46.66)	6 (40)	1 (6.66)	1(6.66)	00
Managing budget heads	11 (73.33)	3 (20)	00	1 (6.66)	00
Meeting unforeseen expenses	12 (80)	2 (13.33)	00	1 (6.66)	00
Average	9.6 (64)	4 (26.66)	0.2 (1.33)	1 (6.66)	0.2 (1.33)

The table-2 reflects the opinion of female secondary school headteachers about their financial and budgetary problems which they generally encounter within promoting quality of education. The data analysis demonstrates that in overall 90.66% of the respondents reported that they faced financial and budget-related problem in proper maintenance of their schools for promoting quality of education. The table further elaborates that 80% of the female secondary school headteachers described that they faced problems because of insufficient non-salary budget (NSB) and all (100%) of them faced problems due to its delayed release by the authorities/ department. Similarly, 86.66% reported their problems related to the complicated process of utilizing the budget; and 93.33% faced difficulty in managing different heads of school budget/finances/ accounts. Likewise, 93.33% of the female secondary school headteachers affirmed that they faced problems in meeting unforeseen expenses within the limited allocated budget of from other heads.

Table 3. The opinion of female secondary school teachers about their problems related to stakeholders or teachers, staff, parents & community or personnel

Statement/ Theme	Level of Agreement				
	Frequencies & Percentages (given in parentheses below)				
	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA
Female headteachers face problems related to					
Political pressure	11 (73.33)	4 (26.66)	00	00	00
Undue community groups' pressure	8 (53.33)	6 (40)	1 (6.66)	00	00
Teachers' conflict and groupings	12 (80)	3 (20)	00	00	00
Social problems	9 (60)	6 (40)	00	00	00
The pressure of departmental authorities	8 (53.33)	7 (46.66)	00	00	00
<i>Average</i>	<i>9.6 (64)</i>	<i>5.2 (34.66)</i>	<i>0.2 (1.33)</i>	<i>00</i>	<i>00</i>

The table-3 indicates problems of female secondary school headteachers related to stakeholders including teachers, staff, parents & community and student which they faced in promoting quality of education. According to the table, all (100%) and 93.33% of the respondents were of the view that they face problems of political and undue community (ethnic groups') pressure respectively that affects their school management functions for quality education. Similarly, all (100%) were facing a problem of / and due to teacher's conflicts and groupings in their school which not only hinders their performance but the quality of education also. All (100%) reported their social problems and undue departmental pressure which according to them caused stress and socio-psychological problems. Such conditions also create difficulty in the promotion of quality of education at the secondary level. In overall, 98.66% of the female secondary school headteachers reported that they face problems in promoting quality of education because of undue political, ethnic, and departmental pressure; conflicts and grouping of teachers in the schools and male domination (social problems like stigmatizing) in the society.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study are remarkable and attention-seeking and useful for all of the stakeholders of secondary schools particularly, female secondary schools. This study demonstrates that female secondary school headteachers face problems of lack of infrastructure (table-1) that hinder their performance for enhancing the quality of education. It is supported by different previous studies (Suleman, Hussain, Butt, & Ahmad, 2012; Suleman, 2015; Hameed-ur-Rehman, & Begum, 2013; Zafar, 2003; Shahzadi, 2002; and Shah, 2003) which demonstrated the similar results. The female secondary school headteacher also reported their problems associated with school's financial resources/ finances/ budget of school

funds (table-2) which coincides with the results of the studies of Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Iqbal, Ali and Badshah (2013); Rehman (2002); Hussain (2001); Khan (1980); Khalid (1998); Malik (1991); (Saleem (2002) and Qureshi (2002). Results of the study demonstrate that female secondary school headteachers face problems in promoting quality of education which are related to stakeholders or teachers, staff, parents & community or personnel. It determines that female headteachers usually face problems because of undue political, ethnic, and departmental pressure; conflicts and grouping of teachers in the schools and male domination (social problems like stigmatizing) in the society (table-3). Alike results were demonstrated by various previous studies (Juma, Simatwa, & Ayodo, 2016; Makura, 2014; Hungi, & Thuku, 2010; Simkins, Garret, Memon and Nazirali, 1997; Nzeli, 2013; and Hungi, & Thuku, 2010). It is remarkable to mention that all of the studies mentioned in this paper more or less seem to addressed all areas of the problems of headteachers and reflect alike results.

In light of the results and discussion, this study concludes that female secondary school teachers face different problems in promoting the quality of education. They face infrastructure-related and financial problems along with undue political, ethnic, and departmental pressure; conflicts and grouping of teachers in the schools and male domination (social problems like stigmatizing) in the society. Therefore, suitable measures may be taken to address the issue for the cause of quality education.

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