

**Challenges to Female Educational Leaders in Pakistan:  
Effectiveness of Female Educational Leaders**

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**Abstract**

While highlighting not only the challenges that female educational leaders encounter in maintaining their leading and managerial positions in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (henceforth, KP), Pakistan, this study identifies the stratagems that they adopt while handling those challenges. Using qualitative case study design, the data from nine participant female educational leaders (elementary education managers) at three districts of KP were collected via semi-structured interviews, field notes, and observations. Findings of the study exhibit that female educational managers faced various challenges in the workplace that lead to limiting their effectiveness and efficiency in their administrative roles. In order to cope with the challenges, the participant female educational leaders identified professional development courses, mentoring, family support, collaboration, and understanding of culture as some of the effective strategies. This study thus recommends that for empowering female educational leaders to deal with challenges effectively, a degree in educational management and leadership as a prerequisite for educational managers, an appropriate method of induction for new leaders, and few policy level changes are desirable.

**Keywords:** Organization structure; Female educational leaders; Educational politics; Gender discrimination; Handling strategies

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## Introduction

Underrepresentation of females in educational leadership is among numerous challenges to Education in Pakistan. Research in the US context (e.g., Lopez, 2008) and the Asian context (e.g., Shamsodin, Saeed & Shahla, 2012) demonstrates that some of the challenges associated with the managerial positions have a relationship with women's underrepresentation in leadership management. Nonetheless, studies addressing women's underrepresentation in leadership position in Pakistan are scant. This study therefore, explores the challenges that women leaders face while performing their educational management responsibilities in elementary and secondary education level in KP, Pakistan. The focus is to examine how numerous challenges influence their overall efficiency and effectiveness in leading roles. It merits mentioning that the present study is a pioneering endeavor that not only examines issues associated with female educational leaders in the province of KP, Pakistan but also stipulates worthwhile suggestions to policy makers for addressing women educational leaders' issues on realistic grounds. To explore the aforementioned issues of women educational leaders, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the problems that female educational leaders come across in their professional lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that hinders their performance?
  - a. Does their families create challenges for female leaders?
  - b. Does their feminine gender serve as a challenge for managers?
  - c. Do their organizational hierarchies serve as challenge for managers?
  - d. Do lack of proper professional support and internal networking serves as challenge for female leaders?
  - e. What are other factor that may create challenges for female leaders?
2. What are the variant strategies used by female leaders to cope with professional challenges?

The study concludes that gender neutral and equitable policies will lead to safer and secure work environment for women educational leaders, and this will result more effective female educational leadership.

## Literature Review

Notwithstanding majority of teachers in the United States are women (Lopez, 2008; Skrla, et al., 2000; Wyland, 2016), their underrepresentation in the superintendency and other leading school managerial positions is quite evident. The responsibilities of women superintendents increased enormously and by the year 2010, their number

increased to 24.1 percent (Kowalski, et al., 2011). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that in the year 2011-12 approximately 76 percent of teachers in the United States were women, however, they are underrepresented in leading positions. Studies relate the challenge of women leaders' underrepresentation to the challenges associated with various factors that exist at various levels such as family obligations and barriers (e.g., Barmao, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Miller, et al., 2006; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Shamsodin, et al., 2012; Niesche & Keddie, 2011; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Uwizeyimana & Mathevula, 2018), personal influence (Xiang, & Ingram, 2017), entry level to leadership (e.g., Coleman, 2012; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Miller, et al, 2006; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Shamsodin, et al., 2012), structural and social factors such as recruitment and gender (e.g., Manfredi, et al, 2014; Shepherd, 2017; Yadav & Lata, 2018), and workplace (e.g., Brunner, 2000; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Gewertz, 2006; Grogan, 2005; Grummell, et al., 2009; Hanan, 2011; Niesche & Keddie, 2011; Palladino, et al., 2007; Quilantan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). In sum, gender discrimination, culture, organizational structure, structural factors, and family concerns challenge females' capabilities of not only making it to the leading position but also preserving them in education and other fields. This review can be summarized in figure 1 that illuminates that the root causes of majority of the challenges that female educational leaders come across in both gaining and sustaining in managerial positions are: social practices, cultural norms, community attitude toward females, and board members' biases.

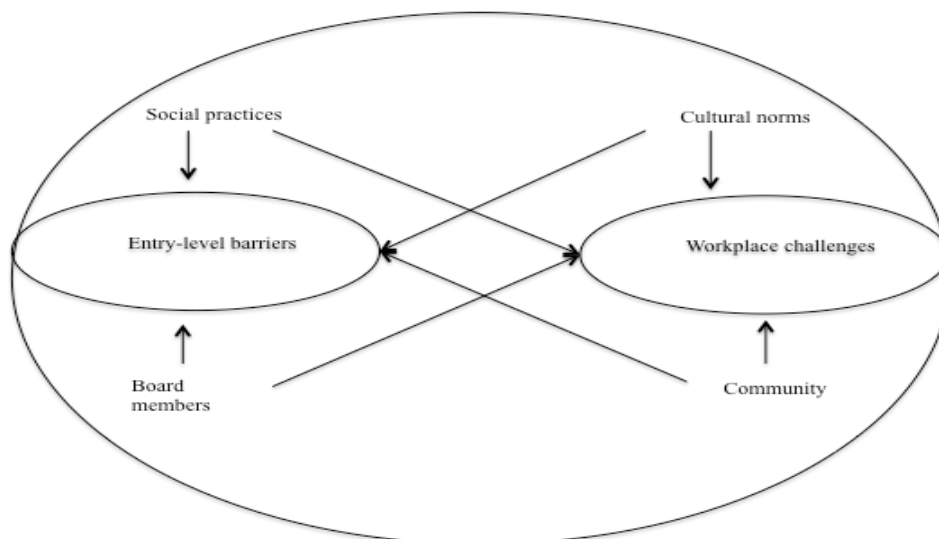


Figure 1: Root Causes of Challenges to Women Educational Leaders

Numerous studies have addressed how women leaders in education deal with the

challenges they face in their jobs (e.g., Alston, 2005; Anderson, 2000; Polka, Litchka, & Davis's, 2008; Quilantan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004; Reed & Patterson, 2007). These studies demonstrate that the most effective strategies that women leaders used include: enhancement of academic qualifications, professional, training, focused objectives, and collaboration. Nevertheless, women in leading educational management positions are yet to be explored the context of Pakistan, which this study endeavors to explore.

### **Methodology**

This study explored female educational leaders' experiences in line with the naturalists' philosophy, which advocated for qualitative case-study design as the most appropriate approach the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Furthermore, a qualitative approach to data offers valuable means to investigate human perspectives in the real-world settings (Creswell, 1996, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Yin 2010).

### **Research context**

Data informing the present study were collected in KP, Pakistan. The rationale for collecting data from the said region was that the said province brought reforms resulting in the bifurcation of educational and institutional management into discrete management and teaching cadres. This was done with aim to increase the prospects towards quality education at school level, ascertain women leaders' participation in the matters of school management, and to generate opportunities for experienced, competent, and aspirant employees to join hands in school management. The KP province offers segregated education to girls in public schools system and each district has both a female and a male District Education Officer (DEO) responsible to supervise gender-specific and segregated schools in order to support women in education leadership. Further division comprises tehsil and sub-divisional managerial offices. However, notwithstanding the dire need for women educational administrators in girls' public schools, females still show reluctance to accept leading positions in educational management that resulted in affecting the overall quality of education in those schools.

### **Population and sample**

The sample consists of the women educational managers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We used purposive sampling technique (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Yu, 2007), in order to select study participants and study sites for observations and interviews. We recruited seven female leaders for the purpose. For the purpose of sampling we included the political affiliations and cultural and religious diversity intact to avoid biasness in

research sites and participants selection. We divided the participants into two groups in one group there were three district education officers (DEOs), and the other group there were six assistant sub-divisional education officers (ADEOs). DEOs serve as main educational administrators of any district and they make all the decisions related to girls' education in particular political district. ADEOs do the monitoring and evaluation of schools to ensure quality instruction in schools. Actually, they do not make decisions but they convey the decisions that are made by DEOs and report back to the EDOs.

### **Data collection methods**

Multiple data collection tools including observations, interviews, informal conversation along with reflective memos were used to collect data from different sources to be more reliable (Yin, 1989). We conducted nine interviews in which minimum time was 20 minutes and maximum time was 60 minutes with the research participants from three districts. Interviews were conducted in Urdu language or Pushto language as per participant's choice and ease, and we translated them into English for the study. The first author arranged three visits with each study participant. In the first visit they were introduced to the researchers and the main purpose of the study, they were requested to participate in the study and they were provided the questionnaire of the interview. The interviews were conducted in the second scheduled visit. The purpose of the third visit was to observe the participant while performing their duties in natural routine manner.

### **Data analyses**

For the analysis purpose we combined all the data sources that's field notes for observations, interviews transcriptions, and recorded journal. The interviewed and other data sources were checked several times to have a broader picture of the overall data. Then we started coding in order to manage the data. In the first cycle of coding open codes were used (Gallicano, 2013) followed by secondary coding to further reduce the data. In the second coding cycle, we tried to link the codes with each other and to developed them into categories and sub categories. We also organize all the categories in similar way to show the relationship among different categories in the form of themes that are discussed below.

### **Findings**

#### **Family as a challenge**

In response to the question about the family as a support or challenge for educational leaders, the data that most of them reported that family in fact supported these leaders in their professional life. However, such a question by the researcher had a larger implication then initially was recognized by the educational leaders. In fact the family life also included the cultural norms and person and family threats. Therefore, we conclude that family

definitely play a crucial role for the professional life of educational leaders. Hadia offered an example of this situation: “It is only that you have to follow all long lasting established norms here. For example, wearing burqa (clad) and not sitting in the front seat of any vehicle”. In Pashtun society Burqa is a choice of a female but for her it has been mandatory as she is aware that it will have consequences for her family if she does not follow the cultural norms.

The female leaders reported that they have to deal with threats to their families while performing their professional tasks. Farah another study participant told she had to face strong personal threats for not obeying clerks’ union unreasonable demands. Farah claimed, “We women avoid involving our men in official problems”. However, some of such threats are not manageable for us. Marwa had to balance family life and professional life. She told that once her family read false things about her that were published in a newspaper, and decided to take revenge from the unions as they took it a challenge to their personal honor. She explained that the whole case was professional but it was just for the purpose of “official agenda”. The incident created problems in her family. The above statements show that these female leaders try to keep themselves away from disturbances and may perform such actions which they might not willing to do for their families. These officers were trying to avoid personal and family threats that include false accusation and blames of taking bribes that ultimately affected their personal life and family.

### **Gender discrimination as a challenge**

These study participants officers also faced the societal problems of gender discrimination in their professions. As an example, Naveen shared they at times discrimination as the male officers select the most competent and hardworking clerks from the female officers. She added, “Because most of the clerks in the education offices are men, at times they blackmail female managers and take extra benefits from the less or unexperienced officers”. Also, Farah told that the office of female DEO is located on third floor which is very hot and suitable for women to work in. DEO Champa shared that she faced many hardships to attain a proper place to sit in as her office. Initially she had no office as several rooms in the office were occupied by male subordinates. They face gender discrimination in their offices which is a general social problem in Pakistan.

### **Organizational hierarchy as challenge**

The data revealed that most of female officers face pressure within their offices, while communicating with managers. As an example, the first author conducted one of the interviews in the office of a DEO on previously decided date and time. However, the DEO on the time of interview was really busy in responding to some quarries from provincial director office that she could not manage interview on that day. During the second visit

she was not available for interview again as she was busy in responding to director. She faced these issues while communication with the provincial administration and her staff in the office.

Moreover, at time the provincial officers asked for huge amount of data to be provided in one hour, which becomes so much difficult for her to manage keeping in view the electricity shut down and other related problems. She shared that always send information to provincial office but time and again they asked for the same information. She told that all teachers transfer, appointment, trainings, leave or any other related matter is dealt by the district office. However, in practice time and again they are imposed decisions from the [provincial office which is a great challenge for them. Similarly, Palwasha stated while elaborating on the issue, "I face a huge internal pressure in transfers and postings in the city". Some of the female teachers want to be posted with their other family member in the same city. For this purpose they at times reach to the offices as well political leaders for transfers. As an example of a similar case was reported that when an officer from provincial secretariat visited the DEO office and give transfer application to her without prior permission from her office. He compelled the DEO to transfer that person as the minister had recommended that transfer.

#### **Lack of supportive mentoring/networking programs as challenge**

After selected as educational leaders, they were provided three months' training, but it cannot be counted as complete training for them to get them ready for the job. More the training was provided in the form of several workshops which further reduce its usefulness. The study found that these managers did not found the training useful for their performance. However, one positive outcome of these workshops was that they contacted with each other's and form groups. For example, Palwasha said, "that the training that was provided initially was not very useful in terms of providing them expertise but they learned from each other experiences". She lamented, "they are lacking continues professional development support, and that they are learning on their own in their profession instead of official support". Malala was very loud while answering the question and said, "That regular mentoring will be of great help for us as most of us are new and we need regular mentoring facilities to perform our duties". Hadia said, "You know, all of us are new, so no one is an expert. I wish there were some experts among us."

The study found that most of the participants stated that male managers were more competent as compared to female. For instance, Naveen said, "I personally believe that men are more competent than women, and that is due to their exposure. They socialize more, and so get more opportunities to apply their knowledge and to learn more.... they are more competent". They shared their contact with one another is of great benefit for them in

performing their duties. However, they were busy and there was no formal networking to help each other that is why they could not get much benefits from these collaboration. It was obvious that the participants were missing mentoring and networking for their professional help.

### **Political interference as a challenge**

The officer also face challenges from the political leaders. They can neither ignore the political interference nor can obey as at times it is against the rules. DEO Palwasha openly discuss the topic, saying, “Political interference is just too much. We are like puppets in their hands.” Marwa also faced problems from the teachers unions. She said, “Union members are strongly backed by politicians. They want us to do whatever they want us to do, whether it is right or wrong. I cannot and will not do anything that is not right”. Most of them reported that they are facing political interference while performing their duties.

### **Lack of resources as a challenge**

Most of the offices lack the required resources which was a big challenge for the. There were computer available in their offices but due to load-management (regular discontinuation of electricity) and lack of internet were big problem to use them effectively. Air conditioners were missing in two district offices which make their work very difficult in summer. Actually, these offices were located on the third floor which were very hot. In one district one ADEO had not an office. Similarly in one district the female officer and staff were sitting in a room made low level staff members. One of the officer was citing in balcony which was against the cultural norms that a female officer is sitting outside. In one district DEO and DDEO offices were given air conditioners (A/C) by the education department, but they were not in working conditions. One of the DEO due to her health conditions as she had gone through a surgery and was in danger of infection spent from her pocket to fix the Air Condition in the office. As per rules they were supposed to provide with the facility of kitchen, restroom and a room for training, however, in practice they were not provided any of these. In fact, DEO circles were supposed to monitor all schools without providing them official vehicle which out their lives into risks due to terrorism. This serious scarcity of physical resources is significant challenge to female officers.

### **Corruption in department as a challenge**

Participants apparently faced a lot of challenges of corruption in the system. All the officers agreed that they system is full with corrupt practices and they have to deal with it. They told that they face corruption at all levels in which political leaders and even clerks and office boys are involved. One DEO shared an interesting story that once a school office accompanied a circle an ADEO visited her office to complain against the absence



from duty a school teacher. In fact she appreciated for reporting the malpractice in a school, but once when she inquired the case the peon and the school, teacher has made an arrangement that the peon would mark attendance of the teacher when she was not at school and she paid him some money. Few students were in the school who usually did not come to school as in fact there was no teacher at school. After some time the peon wanted to get more money from the teacher and instead of giving him more money she started coming to school regularly. This made the peon in trouble as he was now supposed to be at school and therefore he complained against the teacher. However, due to political pressure the concerned EDO was not able to take any action against the teacher or the peon. Gulalay told that even DDEO took bribe from people to get them transferred or posted them, or allowed them to perform duty in the examinations.

### **Strategies**

This section addresses the research question: What are variant strategies used by female leaders to cope with professional challenges?

The study was conducted at the beginning of participants managerial careers, so some of the option to improve their academic qualifications were not possible for them. They were facing the challenge of learning through swim when they were already in. However, all the participants stated that collaboration with each other's was of great help for them. For example, Marwa said, "I am trying to work collaboratively with males and seek help from them." Similarly, Malala said, "I acknowledge my subordinates and colleagues". Champa stated that being a woman she tried to keep less contact with men but get help from them in case of need. She said, "I respect myself as a woman and try to remain in my limits, but I have to communicate with men to learn from them. However, I do not trust everyone; I ask one person in the department who I trust". Most of the ASDEOs get help from the male colleagues in their office, as Gulalay said, "I went to my boss to get his help". She further elaborated, "I talked to my friends and colleagues in other districts about their experiences as well". Similarly, Hadia explained her way of dealing with circumstances, "I follow the cultural norms and try to handle the problems in acceptable manners" Naveen said, "I trust my judgements. I discuss with others but instead of following their suggestions rely on my own judgements". Few of them get support from their family members who are more competent and experienced than them. For example, Marwa said, "My husband also works in education department and he is of great help due to his experienced friends". Champa and Palwasha following the cultural and social values, as Champa said, "there are many malpractices going on in the society but for girls education I try my best to perform my duties properly and avoid corrupt people". Palwasha said, "

I am confident and I strongly oppose the things that are not suitable in my job". This shows that they skillful and confident, they help each other through collaboration, and they also sought help from their family members to perform their duty efficiently.

### **Discussions and Conclusion**

The participants in this study reported multifaceted, and multi-dimensional challenges. Although, these challenges were interwoven, three levels of trends could be observed in the overall picture of them, which are: a) personal level (personal competence, personal threats, gender, and family concerns); b) organizational level; and c) cultural level (norms and social barriers). It merits mentioning that the organizational, personal, and cultural levels of challenges might not be baffled with the intensity of these challenges, rather, it is the reflection the nature of the challenges that women leaders face in real-world settings. All those challenges are diligently connected to a leader's personal life that is gender and family are assorted and are labelled as personal level challenges. The challenges that potentially affected female leaders' decisions but had no direct relationship to their personal lives are assorted and termed organizational level challenges. Lastly, the challenges that extremely influenced their decisions at a considerably broader level than that of organizational and personal level challenges are assorted and are termed as cultural level challenges. Having the interrelated nature in the broader but deeper perspective, the following sections deliberate on the level of challenges individually and attempt to ascertain the associations amid all the three.

### **Personal-level challenges**

Findings of the present study demonstrate that the participants faced challenges due to personal threats prone to being transferred to undesirable far flung areas, disbelief in their capabilities, averseness to share office-related matters with their family members due to unwarranted penalties and consequences, and the confines associated with the traditional self of being women. All such elements interrupted and disturbed the leaders' decision-making and powers in administration. In particular situations, they appeared to be halfheartedly preferred making certain choices for they sought to evade negative consequences.

As discussed in the previous studies (e.g., Barmao, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Uwizeyimana & Mathevula, 2018), family worked as an impediment to women in procuring and upholding management positions. Yet, this study exhibits that family did not work as a barrier in attainment access to the leading position, in fact it did the opposite. All the participants cherished their family's backing in pursuing their work. Although participants' familial setup has no direct opposition their professional ambitions, certain family-related sociocultural norms such as males' responsibilities are to safeguard their women to the full and females' responsibilities to evade circumstances that might jeopardize their families' honor, and hence did push the them to go against their will in decision-making in such unavoidable circumstances. Likewise, social science research widely explored gender discrimination. For instance, Brunner (2000) studied twelve female superintendents and found that persistently existing gender bias in the workplace is hard to escape. Gewertz (2006) also endorsed that the foremost reasons for three female superintendents' resignation from work was gender discrimination.

Findings present study too corroborate with the previous studies. It is pertinent to allow females to administer their offices because this would help to evade men's interference in women's offices. Women representation in employees' associations is desirable so as help them to negotiate with woman officers directly. The DEO's over-reliance on clerks' say in decision-making made female educational leaders to believe that males seem to be more proficient points at the main argument against their efficiency as leaders. Naveen, a participant's assertion about qualifications verses competence, "Even if they are less qualified than women, they are more competent because of socialization" upholds Champa's opinion that males have movement in social setup and consequently acquire extra opportunities to nurture and flourish professionally. Additionally, majority of the participants desired to have skilled clerks to be their office staff and the researcher's reflections reinforced the aforementioned expressions. Women educational leaders were inclined to validate nearly all decisions concerning transfers, budgetary matter, meeting proceedings, and even the use of resources either with their clerks or with male DEOs prior to finalizing and concluding them.

Although none of the participants explicitly acknowledged challenges related to competencies, it seemed that they did have complete preparation to undertake their positions as independent leaders having entirely unlike demands compared to their erstwhile teaching responsibilities. For them, teaching did not help to afford relevant and adequate experience mandatory for strategic preparation and informed decision-making concerning instruction teaching and learning in schools. In addition, advances administrative expertise were found essential for success in leading executive positions. Leadership demands to have a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies inseparable from managing positions. An effective leader not only have to know the legal perspectives of diverse actions, skills in communication and computer but also have the procedural knowledge of how budgets are made and audits are done.

This study recommends that policies be developed the way that force the prospective managers and leaders to have advanced graduate qualifications in educational management as the prerequisite for the position. Additionally, existing leaders ought to have access to academies for training in management in order to make them reclaim their self-confidence. Such transformations would tackle the challenges related to competency and would empower the leaders towards informed decision-making. Current literature backs the acclaimed approach, for instance, "Evidence suggests a number of factors contributing to the lack of empowerment in female leaders. These include the lack of administrative efficiency, limited training opportunities" (Hanan, 2011 p.153). Experience coupled with opportunities of professional growth would facilitate female leaders to cope with the challenges effectively and attain their aspirations.

### **Organizational-level challenges**

Findings of the present study illustrate that woman educational leaders consistently battle with corruption, internal pressures, and dearth of authority and resources. The bureaucratic element in Pakistani education system(s) appear to be promoting such challenges to woman educational managers. The top-down bureaucratic approach confines the leaders' decision-making authorities. For instance, according to system policies, the managers are answerable to the bosses (officials senior in the hierarchy), and consequently, in numerous cases, they have no option except to conform to their superiors' directives. Hierarchic allocation of power in bureaucratic system produces organizational strains, involving sex-role typecasts and race bias towards female superintendents (Quilantan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004).

Additionally, it is evident that the presence of numerous structural challenges, for example partial authority to female leaders (Hanan 2011) warns, "...centralization of authority in headquarters run by men limits women's ability to lead effectively and to make

decisions, even those that concern their own departments” (p.152). The participants appeared to be conscious about the real reason for the problems for they mentioned communication gaps amid their superiors and them. Almenkash et al. (2007) declares that ineffective communiqué and inadequate information system contributes to the slit between women educational managers and the higher administration. This slit has the potential to cause, “the isolation of woman sections from the course of events that take place at the corporate headquarters, and the lack of participation in strategic planning and academic decision-making and membership in academic and administrative committee” (Hanan, 2011, p.153).

For almost four decades, corruption in public education system has grown to the exponential extent in Pakistan and has diverged the researchers’ and educators’ attention. For instance, “The data on intentional corruption is so huge with reference to education in Pakistan that even Terabytes are not enough to show their magnanimity” (Feroze, 2011) and the province of KP is not an exception. This trend of corruption has greatly affected the system, nonetheless it looks like an iceberg for fairly new office bearers in the prevailing old system. Pakistan does not spend in excess of 2.4 percent of its GDP on education that is unquestionably inadequate to afford schools and equip offices with the requisite resources. Aside from other elements in the administrative system, for example faulty procurement procedures, corruption, and terrorism (Ghazi, et al., 2010), the financial matters and resources shortage intensify the challenges further.

This study offers recommendations for addressing both the challenges, which are powerful bureaucratic hierarchy and corruption necessitate patience, enhancement of resources, monitoring mechanisms efficiency, and tireless efforts to transmute the 70-year-old faulty system in Pakistan into an advanced and a transparent one. First, technological resourcefulness of the offices is mandatory. For instance, they would have uninterrupted access to electricity via generators and solar plants. Phone and the Internet services are desired to be available throughout. This would help in minimizing the communication slit and break amid offices. Second, effective measures are desirable for professional development and access to the available resources on the official websites would be equally helpful. Third, the executives’ job descriptions need to have legal protection so as to not curtail the bureaucratic system from misusing its authority. Finally, enriching leaders’ capabilities via professional trainings and networking would assist in enhancing their self-confidence. Altogether, the preceding recommendations demand enormous resources and proficiencies that might look overwhelmingly demanding, but numerous non-government organizations (NGOs) might be keen to offer financial support to education system(s).

### **Cultural-level challenges**

The last level of challenges that the participants reported are related to the various structural and functional aspects of social settings and have political nature involving deep-rooted cultural norms and conventional in Pakistan. Scholarly work confirms the presence of political interference in educational system and Pakistan is no exception. For example, Komatsu (2009) has also expressed similar political interference. The primary reason for the unquestioned and unrestricted political interference in the public sector education in Pakistan is the established idea that officers' survival is entwined with the political will. For Ghazi et al., (2010), unwarranted political interference was the primary factor that triggered deterioration of education in Pakistan and this study conforms to the earlier research findings.

To evade political interference, changes in the policy-making are desirable. For instance, decreasing politicians' parts in recruitment, remodeling transfer rules, and guaranteeing legal protections to educational leaders in case of misuse of authority. A common that politicians give to the educational leaders is that of transferring them to undesirable far-flung regions so that their family could suffer as a result of female leaders' resistance to political interference. So as to address this challenge, the recruitment process ought to be completed at district level instead of the province. District-wise recruitment would, somewhat, lessen female educational managers' apprehensions of being propelled to other districts. This would also help in preparing educational managers to foster a district plan. Still, there need to be a particular monitoring apparatus readily in function to curtail DEOs misuse of authority.

All the three research contexts explored in this study share culture at large. The KP province has a unique culture having the influence of Hindu's culture, Afghanis' customs, local beliefs system, and (mis)interpretations of certain Islamic teachings. Although, there are innumerable positive aspects of the KP's culture, for instance reverence, assistance, bravery, and hospitality, some practices need to be contested. As witnessed in this study, the behavioral expectations from women, that is dress code, norms of address, and submissiveness need to be contested. For women in KP have accepted and internalized their positions, they feel comfortable in the given social setting. Still, to bring changes, they have to questions the practices such as, "Why can a woman not sit in the front seat of the car?" or "Why should women always be expected to sacrifice to uphold their family's honor?" Mentioning such practices are beyond the scope of this study, still, the findings do hearten curriculum changes so as to challenge the long-standing, worn-out, unquestioned, and in numerous cases, un-Islamic practices might be curtailed from being transferred to the coming generations. Other researches (e.g., Sidani,2005) confirm the adverse results of culture on females' professional efficiency due to the deep-rooted prevailing cultural

patterns that are occasionally tribal and non-religious but has the potential of putting pressures on females to involve in socioeconomic activities. Lastly, in Pakistani culture, behavioral expectations from women have the potential to curtail their effectiveness in professional spheres of life (Rareiya, 2007) which evidently demonstrates that woman educational managers' challenges need redressal at the cultural level embodying both the organizational and personal stresses.

### **Implications/ Recommendations**

Female leaders/managers work in multifaceted environments where it is expected that they would fulfill official, personal, cultural, and political demands. Such environments are thus, the sites for their persistence to wrestle against and to accomplish their visionary aspirations of leading the district education effectively while avoid breaching the cultural norms and avert negative consequences. Frequently, support strategies are essential to accomplish their aspirations. This study thus recommends the following stratagems to empower and support female managers in their pursuit to deliver quality education:

- Teacher' training institutes ought to offer degree programs for aspiring educational leaders which in turn, prepare them for accepting the responsibilities of managing district education system(s).
- In-service teacher' training institutions, such as PITE and RITEs ought to have an effective mechanism to recruit future managers suitably. The training would be made more practical through utilizing current instructors' and officers' skills.
- The secretariat ought to acknowledge and permit the former managers to closely work with the newly inducted managers and ascertain a smooth transition of efficient workplace trainings.
- Before transferring the managers, they have to be given ample time to discover necessary details about the district they are being transferred to.
- Policy makers ought to formulate policies that guarantees job security and autonomy of the leaders in the district. For instance, education ought to be de-politicized so that political leaders have no role either in enrollment, transfer, or appointment.
- Bureaucracy harming education should be replaced by democratic ways of leadership. This could be made incrementally for altering the whole system immediately might create disturbance in smooth running of the system. Also, such transition requires expertise, open mindedness, adequate resources, and sufficient time.
- The managers' transfers ought to be rational so as to curtail the vicious wished wishes of the politicians and the bureaucracy.

- Instead of province-wise recruitment, the managers' selection has to be made district-wise and should explicitly written in the recruitment advertisements.

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