

Impact of Distributed Leadership of School Heads on Teachers' Job Commitment in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of school heads' distributed leadership (DL) on teacher job commitment in public secondary schools in Southern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Understanding how leadership models influence teacher commitment is crucial for enhancing educational outcomes in resource-constrained environments, such as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Effective leadership distribution addresses teacher isolation and leverages collective expertise, potentially mitigating attrition and enhancing instructional quality. This research provides crucial insights for policymakers and school administrators seeking practical strategies to enhance teacher engagement and promote sustainable school improvement in Pakistan's public education system. Using a descriptive design, 702 teachers (361 male and 341 female) participated in a 7-point Likert scale questionnaire. Key findings reveal significant teacher neutrality regarding current Distributed Leadership practices, indicating ambivalence about implementation. However, a strong consensus exists (69.5% of boys' teachers, 74.3% of girls' teachers) that Distributed Leadership positively enhances job commitment. A t-test confirmed no statistically significant gender difference in this perception ($t = 0.5416$, $p = 0.5884$). Results highlight a critical gap between teachers' belief in DL's benefits and their experience of its practice, suggesting a need for more authentic leadership distribution.

Keywords: Distributed Leadership, Teacher Job Commitment, School Heads, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Public Secondary Schools, Teacher Perceptions.

Introduction

Distributed leadership describes an approach where leadership duties are collectively undertaken by various individuals throughout a school (Angelle, 2010). Research indicates this model has become a significant focus in both educational scholarship and practical application. Its core principle is that every person within the school community holds valuable potential to contribute meaningfully to the institution's progress and success. This framework actively encourages cooperative effort and mutual Accountability, moving beyond reliance on a sole figure of authority. Despite its broad acceptance, some scholars argue that distributed leadership may represent a reformulation of conventional leadership concepts, potentially reinforcing existing administrative systems rather than transforming them (Humphrey, 2010). This approach to leadership represents a clear departure from conventional command-and-control structures. It emphasizes working together, sharing responsibilities collectively, and establishing mutual Accountability among everyone in the organization. Research has shown that this style is associated with better results and increased innovation (Harris & Spillane,

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2013). At its core, distributed leadership focuses on cultivating the leadership potential that exists within every member. Building these capabilities is intended to enable organizations to respond more quickly to new challenges, enhance employee engagement, and foster a commitment to continuous improvement (Gronn, 2015).

A defining feature is enabling people at every level to take on leadership roles and contribute to choices. This empowerment helps build an organizational culture that is stronger, more adaptable, and flexible (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Distributed leadership is inherently a fluid process, spreading leadership functions across various individuals or teams. This sharing enables the organization to tap into diverse expertise, encourage novel ideas, and promote learning together (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Job Commitment

Teacher commitment reflects a deep psychological bond and dedication educators feel toward their work, their students, and their school community. This dedication extends beyond basic job duties, revealing itself through consistent effort, emotional investment, and a powerful sense of responsibility. Current research identifies three core aspects of this commitment: affective commitment (a genuine emotional connection to and pride in teaching), normative commitment (a sense of moral duty toward students and the profession), and continuance commitment (an awareness of the negative consequences of leaving) (Lauermann, 2013). Educators with a strong commitment typically display high levels of internal motivation, resilience in the face of difficulties, and a constant focus on improving student success. They often describe teaching as a true calling. Factors such as having control over their work, supportive school leaders, and significant professional relationships have a critical influence on this commitment (Toropova et al., 2023).

The importance of robust teacher commitment is evident due to its strong connection with positive educational outcomes. Committed teachers are consistently associated with greater student involvement, higher academic performance, and more positive learning environments (Wang et al., 2023). Furthermore, they tend to have better attendance records and are less likely to plan to leave their jobs, offering crucial stability for both schools and students (Toropova et al., 2023). Maintaining high levels of commitment, however, faces significant hurdles. These include overwhelming workloads, burnout, excessive administrative tasks, insufficient resources, and the demands of addressing complex student needs. Recent studies emphasize that fostering commitment requires proactive strategies, including supportive and empowering leadership, opportunities for professional growth and collaboration, adequate resources, recognition of expertise, and the cultivation of teacher well-being to mitigate burnout. Protecting teacher commitment is thus fundamental for educational quality and equity (Chen et al., 2024).

Research Objectives

1. To find the perceptions of stakeholders (male and female teachers) about the Head's Distributed Leadership.
2. To find the perceptions of stakeholders (male and female teachers) about the impact of Heads' Distributed Leadership on the Job Commitment of teachers.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions of the study, addressing the objectives of the study:

1. What are the perceptions of stakeholders (male and female teachers) about the Heads' Distributed Leadership?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders (male and female teachers) about the impact of Heads' Distributed Leadership on the Job Commitment of teachers?

Significance of the Study

This research holds critical importance for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's education system by empirically bridging the gap between school heads' distributed leadership practices and teachers' job commitment. It equips administrators with actionable strategies to enhance teacher retention and motivation, while informing provincial policymakers on how to optimize leadership frameworks to combat regional attrition. Academically, it advances global leadership theories by testing distributed models in Pakistan's understudied socio-cultural context, challenging assumptions of universal applicability.

Literature Review**Leadership of School Heads**

Principals, also known as headmasters, hold a vital position in molding the educational journey for students, faculty, and the whole school community. Their responsibilities extend significantly past routine administration, requiring a versatile set of capabilities (Reid, 2021).

Leadership Responsibilities

The traditional school leadership often operated through hierarchical direction, whereas the contemporary educational practice increasingly values shared models (distributed leadership model) that empower a wider range of stakeholders to contribute their expertise and engage in decision-making processes (Bryant, 2014).

Leadership Roles within the School

This broader view recognizes that effective leadership extends well beyond the principal, encompassing diverse individuals who utilize their specialized capacities and dedication to cultivate a successful learning environment. For instance, librarians foster literacy and access to resources, and athletic directors oversee sports and extracurricular programs; each of these distinct leadership positions is vital in shaping student experiences and advancing the school's objectives (Burnett, 2024).

Teachers Assuming Leadership Roles

The perception of teachers has also evolved significantly, moving beyond their instructional role as many now actively assume leadership responsibilities, leveraging their knowledge and commitment to positively influence the entire school community (Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010).

Collaborative Process

Fundamentally, collaboration serves as the bedrock for success in education, where a joint process involving school heads, teachers, and parents fosters a unified vision, enhances decision-making, and ultimately creates a more enriching educational setting for all students (Conrad & Lundberg, 2022).

Distributed Among School Staff

The conventional structure of centralized school leadership is increasingly being supplemented by a distributed model, where responsibilities are shared among diverse staff members. This collective approach empowers educators to apply their specialized knowledge and cultivates a shared commitment to the institution's achievements (King & Stevenson, 2017).

Important Decisions

Historically, teachers were frequently excluded from pivotal decisions, yet their essential perspectives are now more widely acknowledged (Williams, 2022).

Professional Development Sessions

Integral to this model is peer-led professional development, where educators themselves guide colleagues in acquiring current skills vital for student outcomes (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

Overall Performance of the School

A school's overall effectiveness is a holistic assessment that incorporates academic results, graduation rates, stakeholder well-being, program vitality, and institutional culture. Sustained high performance relies fundamentally on robust leadership, dedicated teaching staff, collaborative practices, and ongoing enhancement efforts (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, & Ambasz, 2019).

Recognizes and Rewards Teachers

Within this ecosystem, school heads play a pivotal role in cultivating a culture of appreciation. Formal recognition and rewards for teacher dedication and accomplishments boost motivation, elevate morale, and powerfully affirm the value of their contributions to the school community (Wang'ombe, 2023).

School's Goals and Objectives

Our school's philosophy centers on cultivating a genuine passion for lifelong learning, moving beyond rote memorization to spark deep intellectual engagement. We strive to create a dynamic atmosphere where students feel empowered to question, investigate new concepts, and pursue subjects that genuinely spark their interest. This is realized through diverse, active methodologies including student-facilitated discussions, collaborative projects, experiential activities, and interactive learning experiences. By nurturing this intrinsic love for discovery, we empower students to develop into self-motivated, critical thinkers capable of navigating and succeeding in an ever-changing world (Martinez & McGrath, 2014).

Creative Problem-Solving

The collective inventiveness of school staff is crucial to the institution's vitality. Principals are essential in fostering an environment where educators adopt creative approaches to challenges, leading to a more responsive and impactful educational setting for learners (Sergiovanni, 2015).

Responsibility for the School's Success

School success represents a collective accomplishment, achieved through the committed contributions of multiple stakeholder groups rather than any single individual. Every constituency holds vital responsibility in cultivating conditions conducive to student development and scholastic achievement (Murphy & Bleiberg, 2018).

Effective in Delegating Tasks

A school's achievements depend on the combined work of all staff members, not just the principal. Astute school leaders understand this dynamic and skillfully employ delegation, an essential leadership competency to enable their teams, fostering greater operational efficiency and a flourishing institutional climate (Pondiscio, 2020).

Leadership Opportunities are Accessible

While outdated views may picture leadership as a solitary position issuing directives, contemporary education fosters leadership possibilities across all staff levels. This widespread

accessibility cultivates enhanced collaboration and greater agency within the school community (Leonard et al., 2023).

Actively Works to Develop Leadership

Principals play a crucial role in fostering a school-wide ethos that values leadership. Beyond serving as the primary leader, they act as key agents in nurturing leadership capabilities among both educators and pupils (Day et al., 2020).

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning

An unwavering commitment to ongoing learning and enhancement fuels sustained excellence in schools. This transcends mere attainment of positive outcomes; it necessitates embedding a growth orientation across the entire community, students, educators, and administrators who consistently pursue avenues for advancement (Warner et al., 2024).

School's Vision and Mission

A school's vision and mission act as its fundamental compass, directing the path toward student achievement and institutional effectiveness. For these guiding principles to materialize, teachers must move beyond simple awareness to achieve deep comprehension and personal integration of these statements (McNair et al., 2022).

Teachers' Job Commitment

The dedication of teachers forms the essential foundation for a flourishing school. Educators who are passionate, devoted, and deeply engaged in their work significantly enhance the learning atmosphere for students (Mohd Sofian, 2024).

Motivate Teacher

Envision arriving at school every day feeling energized, empowered, and enthusiastic about tackling new challenges. This dynamic stems from a principal whose motivational approach cultivates a constructive, growth-focused culture for all staff (Kouzes & Posner, 2024).

Teaching Responsibilities

While central to the school, teachers' influence transcends classroom instruction. They critically support the principal's vision for an effective learning environment through impactful teaching methods. Cultivating student curiosity, ensuring a secure and stimulating classroom environment, and pursuing continuous improvement directly advance institutional goals and reduce administrative burdens. Teachers further strengthen cohesion by aligning their curriculum and pedagogy with the school's objectives. Supplying administrators with consistent feedback on student development and curriculum efficacy also enables informed decisions and school-wide enhancement, thereby significantly advancing the school community's success (Berg, 2018).

Positively Affects Job Commitment

A principal's leadership approach profoundly shapes the whole school, with its most substantial influence often being on teacher dedication. Effective leadership generates a cascading effect, elevating staff morale, drive, and professional commitment (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Collaborative Environment

A thriving school is built upon a foundation of collaboration. This extends beyond student cooperation to establishing a culture where all stakeholders —educators, support staff, parents, and administration — work collectively toward common objectives (Cody et al., 2018).

Strengthens Job Commitment.

Principals critically influence teacher dedication. Moving beyond basic task management, effective school leaders strategically cultivate conditions that nurture passion, commitment, and a drive for excellence among educators (Kashamba et al., 2023).

Professional Development

Continuous professional learning serves as a foundational element for a dynamic teaching staff. It constitutes an enduring process, not an isolated occurrence, providing educators with current expertise, methodologies, and practical strategies to perpetually enhance their instructional practice (Burnett, 2024).

Collaboration and Teamwork

Within the education dynamic field, genuine collaboration and teamwork are fundamental to a successful school, far exceeding mere terminology. Unified efforts by teachers, staff, and students towards common objectives generate powerful synergy, enhancing both student outcomes and educator dedication (Webb, 2023).

Transparency in Leadership

A principal demonstrating transparency establishes the groundwork for a flourishing school. Openness builds trust, enhances communication, and ultimately cultivates a collective sense of responsibility for the institution's achievements (Fullan, 2023).

Motivated to Achieve School Goals

While a school charts its course, it realizes it requires a motivated and devoted teaching staff. Schools can cultivate motivation among teachers, inspiring them to actively pursue the institution's shared objectives (Sheninger & Murray, 2017).

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the impact of distributed leadership on teacher job commitment in public secondary schools in Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The population consisted of 8,223 teachers across boys' and girls' schools, with a representative sample of 702 participants (361 male and 341 female) selected using Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table through gender-stratified random sampling. Data Collection utilized a researcher-administered 7-point Likert scale questionnaire assessing leadership practices and commitment indicators. Analysis applied descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) to characterize responses and inferential statistics (t-tests) to examine relationships between distributed leadership and teacher commitment outcomes.

Results and Discussion

The following tabular data represents the statistical results of the study:

Table 1: Stakeholders' perceptions regarding Heads Distributed Leadership

Respondents	Heads Distributed Leadership														Total
	SD		DA		TSD		N		TSA		A		SA		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Boys' School Teachers	20	5.5	50	13.8	70	19.4	100	27.7	60	16.6	40	11.1	21	5.8	361
Girls' School Teachers	15	4.4	45	13.2	65	19.1	90	26.4	70	20.5	35	10.3	21	6.1	341

Based on the Table, both Boys' and Girls' School Teachers showed a significant neutral stance (27.7% and 26.4% respectively) regarding the Distributed Leadership of Heads. While combined disagreement (SD+DA+TSD) slightly outweighed combined agreement (TSA+A+SA) for Boys' teachers (38.7% vs 33.5%), Girls' teachers showed a marginal preference for agreement (36.9%) over disagreement (36.7%). The largest single response category for both groups is Neutral, indicating a substantial proportion of teachers lack strong convictions on this leadership approach.

Figure 1: Distributed Leadership of Heads

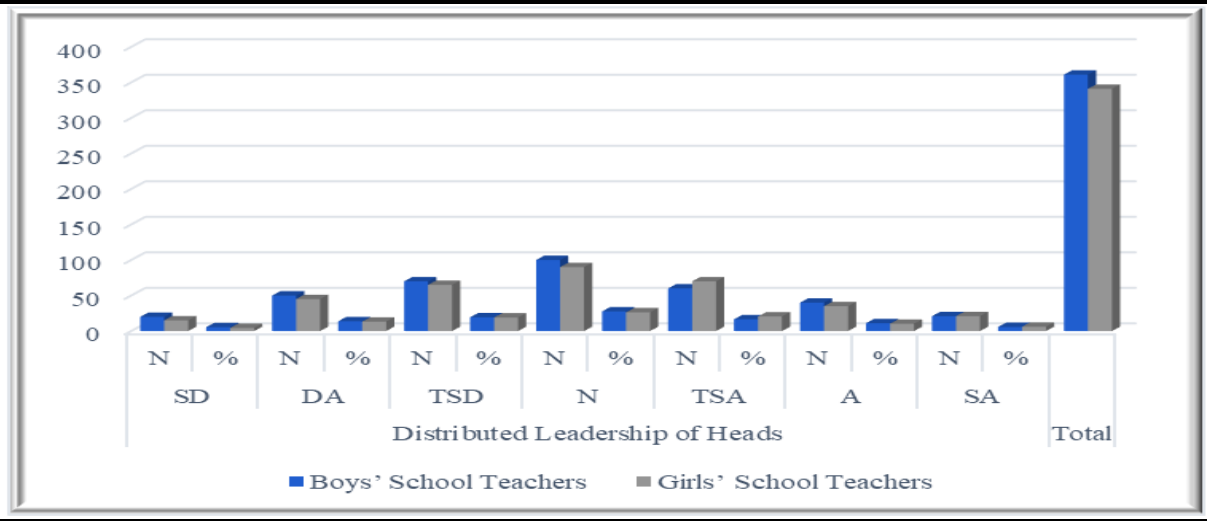


Table 2: Stakeholders' perceptions about the impact of Heads Distributed Leadership on Job Commitment of teachers

Respondents	Job Commitment of Teachers														Total
	SD		DA		TSD		N		TSA		A		SA		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Boys' School Teachers	10	2.8	20	5.5	30	8.3	50	13.8	100	27.7	90	24.9	61	16.9	361
Girls' School Teachers	8	2.3	15	4.4	25	7.3	40	11.7	110	32.3	95	27.9	48	14.1	341

Based on the Table, both Boys' and Girls' School Teachers predominantly agreed that Distributed Leadership positively impacts Teachers' Job Commitment. Combining positive responses (TSA+A+SA), 69.5% of Boys' teachers (27.7% + 24.9% + 16.9%) and 74.3% of Girls' teachers (32.3% + 27.9% + 14.1%) express agreement. Neutral responses are notably lower (13.8% for Boys, 11.7% for Girls), while combined disagreement (SD+DA+TSD) is minimal (16.6% for Boys, 13.9% for Girls). Girls' teachers show slightly stronger agreement overall, particularly in the "TSA" category.

Figure 2: Impact on Teachers' Job Commitment

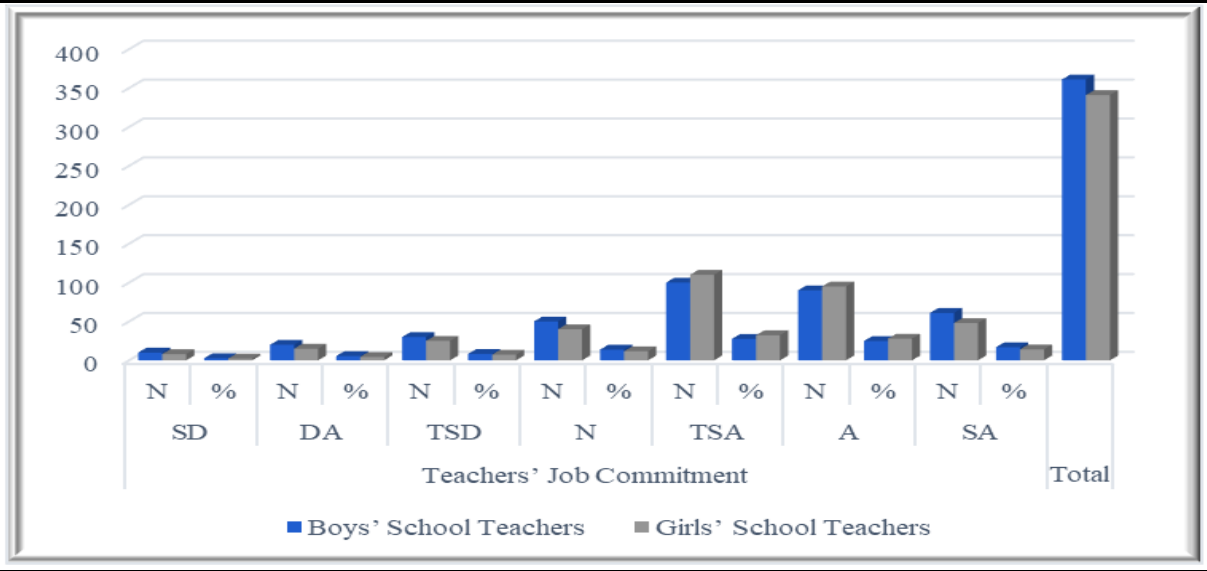
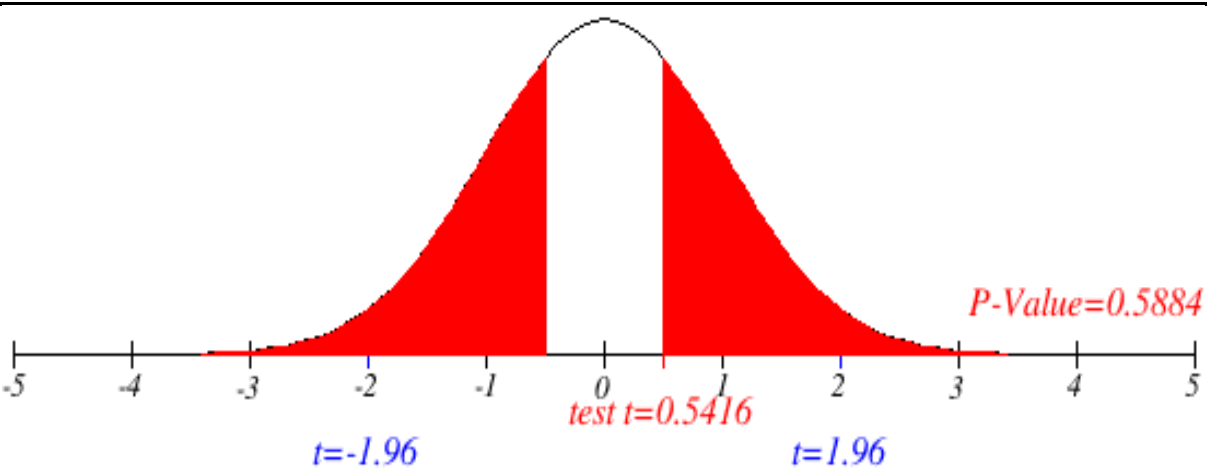


Table 3: Difference between the Stakeholders' perceptions about the impact of Heads Distributed Leadership on the Job Commitment of teachers

T-test						
Job Commitment of Teachers						
Respondents	Frequency	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-tab	p-value
Boys' School Teachers	361	5.01	1.51	0.5416	±1.96	0.5884
Girls' School Teachers	341	5.07	1.42			

The t-test findings reveal no statistically significant difference in perceptions between Boys' School Teachers (M = 5.01, SD = 1.51) and Girls' School Teachers (M = 5.07, SD = 1.42) concerning the effect of Distributed Leadership on Teachers' Job Commitment. The obtained t-value (0.5416) falls within the acceptance range (± 1.96), and the p-value (0.5884) exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that the minor variation in their mean scores is likely attributable to chance rather than a genuine difference in opinion. Consequently, both groups hold statistically similar views on the matter.

Figure 3: Difference between the views regarding the impact on Teachers' Job Commitment



Findings

Table # 1: Based on the data, the primary finding is that a substantial proportion of teachers in both Boys' and Girls' schools (27.7% and 26.4% respectively) expressed neutral views on Distributed Leadership of Heads, representing the single largest response category for each group. While disagreement responses (38.7%) slightly exceeded agreement (33.5%) among Boys' school teachers, Girls' school teachers showed a marginal tendency towards agreement (36.9%) over disagreement (36.7%). This prevalence of neutral positioning, coupled with closely balanced agreement and disagreement levels, indicates a significant absence of strong consensus or conviction among the teaching staff regarding their heads' practice of distributed leadership.

Table # 2: Based on the data, the key finding is that a substantial majority of both Boys' (69.5%) and Girls' School Teachers (74.3%) agree that Distributed Leadership positively impacts Teachers' Job Commitment, with disagreement being minimal (16.6% and 13.9% respectively) and neutral responses notably low. While both groups demonstrate high consensus on this

positive relationship, Girls' School Teachers express slightly stronger overall agreement, particularly evident in their higher proportion of "Tend to Agree" responses.

Table # 3: Based on the t-test analysis, the key finding is that despite a numerically higher mean agreement score among Girls' School Teachers (5.07) compared to Boys' School Teachers (5.01) regarding the impact of Distributed Leadership on Job Commitment, this difference is statistically insignificant ($t\text{-cal} = 0.5416$, $p = 0.5884 > 0.05$). The calculated t-value falls well within the range defined by the critical t-value (± 1.96), indicating no meaningful difference in perception between the two groups. Therefore, the views of Boys' and Girls' School Teachers on this relationship are statistically equivalent, and the observed variation in mean scores is attributable to random sampling variability rather than a genuine distinction.

Discussion

The finding aligns with the results of Parveen et al. (2023), who observed that secondary school teachers in Pakistan exhibited mixed perceptions regarding distributed leadership, with a high percentage maintaining neutral or indecisive views. The research indicated that many teachers had a limited or unclear understanding of distributed leadership as a concept. This lack of familiarity resulted in difficulty when they tried to assess their head teacher's implementation of such practices. Furthermore, the minimal gap observed between agreement and disagreement scores hinted that intense, shared experiences with distributed leadership frameworks were generally absent within the school environments studied. Teachers did not collectively demonstrate a firm alignment with this leadership model.

This outcome is reinforced by the 2020 research of Khan and Mahmood. Their study demonstrated that distributed leadership substantially increases teachers' dedication to their jobs. This boost in commitment arises because the approach cultivates feelings of ownership, allows educators a voice in decisions, and builds professional trust. Khan and Mahmood noted that schools actively using distributed leadership experienced improved teacher morale and more substantial job satisfaction. Female staff, in particular, experienced greater empowerment and recognition within these collaborative settings. The low levels of disagreement and neutrality seen across participants in the original study further confirm the positive link between distributed leadership and teacher commitment that Khan and Mahmood identified.

The finding also corresponds with work by Ali et al. (2025). They examined how distributed leadership is related to teacher commitment across various types of public schools in Pakistan, including those segregated by gender. Ali et al. found that while female teachers gave marginally more positive ratings regarding the effect of distributed leadership on their commitment, this gender difference was not statistically significant. Essentially, male and female educators held very similar views. This consistency shows that the perceived advantages of distributed leadership for strengthening job commitment are essentially the same for teachers regardless of gender.

Conclusion

Teachers in both school types predominantly showed a neutral stance regarding their Head's practice of distributed leadership. This widespread neutrality suggests a significant lack of firm conviction or shared understanding regarding its implementation. The results were finely balanced between agreement and disagreement, with Boys' School Teachers leaning slightly towards doubt and Girls' School Teachers showing marginally more favor. This overall pattern underscores a prevailing sense of uncertainty and ambivalence among staff. It suggests the current approach to distributed leadership does not win strong support or outright rejection from teachers, potentially indicating a gap in how authentic or compelling they find it.

Teaching staff in both boys' and girls' schools overwhelmingly see distributed leadership as a significant factor in boosting their job commitment, with a vast majority agreeing on this positive link. While teachers in girls' schools expressed slightly more positive views, particularly showing stronger agreement, the core finding holds firmly in both settings: distributed leadership practices substantially

increase teachers' professional dedication and engagement. The consensus is clear and strong across the board.

The statistically equivalent perspectives from teachers in boys' and girls' schools confirm that the gender-specific environment of the school does not produce different views on how distributed leadership affects job commitment. Although girls' school teachers recorded a marginally higher agreement score, this difference is statistically negligible. This demonstrates that both groups fundamentally agree: distributed leadership strongly enhances their professional dedication.

Recommendations

- Schools should implement clear systems that empower teachers to reduce uncertainty about distributed leadership. Leaders need to move beyond superficial involvement by creating transparent processes that enable educators to make meaningful contributions. This structured approach can transform neutral or hesitant attitudes into genuine, active engagement.
- A clear gap exists between teachers' strong theoretical support for distributed leadership and their neutral stance on its current implementation. To bridge this belief-practice gap, schools must ensure consistent application of distributed principles. This requires establishing regular feedback channels and clear Accountability standards, ensuring leadership practices consistently meet staff expectations.

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