Comparative Study of Social Intelligence among Secondary School Heads in AJ&K

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ABSTRACT

Social intelligence is essential for effective communication, collaboration and conflict resolution which ensure the success of commanding authorities. The main target of the study was to analyze the comparison of social intelligence among secondary school heads regarding their gender. As the study was descriptive in nature and quantitative in approach, cross-sectional research design was used. In the study 111 High schools heads of district Rawalakot Azad Jammun & Kashmir (AJ&K) were the population and 96 was the sample of study. Stratified random sampling was used for the equal participation of both genders. A standardized an adapted questionnaire was used to measure social intelligence. To get results independent sample t-test was used. It was found that female heads of schools were exhibiting more social intelligence than male heads of schools. On the basis of the results Null hypothesis of the study was rejected. It was recommended that Department of Elementary and Secondary education AJ&K should organize specific training module for social emotional learning for male heads to uplift their abilities of social intelligence, reduce gender gap an provide continuous professional development. Policy makers should ensure the equal training opportunities of for both male and female, government should allocate resources to support those policies which improve the social intelligence of school heads.

Key words: Social Intelligence, High Schools, Heads of Schools

INTRODUCTION

Social Intelligence (SI), broadly conceptualized as the ability to understand and manage oneself and others effectively in social situations, encompasses skills such as empathy, social awareness, relationship management, conflict resolution, communication adaptability, and influencing others (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2021). It goes beyond mere cognitive intelligence or academic knowledge, focusing on the interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies crucial for navigating complex human dynamics. Within the education sector, SI is paramount. Schools are inherently social ecosystems, demanding leaders who can foster positive climates, build trust, motivate diverse stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community, administration), and navigate the intricate web of relationships and emotions inherent in teaching and learning (Brackett et al., 2020).

Effective educational leadership is less about autocratic decision making and increasingly about collaborative, emotionally resonant, and contextually sensitive approaches. SI enables heads to perceive the emotional undercurrents within the school, understand staff and student needs, and proactively shape a positive, inclusive, and motivating environment conducive to learning and well-being (Rahman & Saeed, 2023). Heads constantly interact with teachers, students, parents, community members, and education officials. High SI allows them to communicate effectively, build rapport, manage expectations, resolve conflicts constructively, and garner support for school initiatives (Khan & Siddiqui, 2022).

Understanding teachers' perspectives, providing empathetic support, offering constructive feedback sensitively, and fostering a sense of belonging and professional growth are all rooted in SI. This directly impacts teacher morale, retention, and effectiveness (Brackett et al., 2020). Educational settings face constant change (policy shifts, curriculum reforms, societal pressures). SI equips heads to manage the anxieties and resistance that accompany change, communicate vision persuasively, and guide their communities through challenges adaptively. Disagreements among staff, between staff and students, or with parents are inevitable. Heads with high SI can diagnose the root causes of conflict, mediate fairly, find mutually acceptable solutions, and preserve relationships (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) encompasses various linguistic, cultural, and geographical (mountainous/remote areas) groups. Heads need SI to understand and respect these nuances, build bridges, and ensure equitable access and participation (Hussain, 2024). The region's history and ongoing developmental challenges necessitate leaders skilled in fostering resilience, understanding trauma (where present), and building cohesive school communities that promote peace and social harmony (Khowaja, 2023). Heads often operate with limited resources while facing increasing accountability demands. SI is crucial for motivating staff under pressure, advocating effectively for the school's needs with higher authorities, and managing community expectations realistically (UNESCO, 2021 – Pakistan report applicable contextually).

Navigating gender norms and promoting girls' education effectively requires heads, both male and female, to possess high levels of social awareness, empathy, and communication skills to engage families and communities sensitively (Khan & Siddiqui, 2022). Successfully implementing national and regional educational policies at the school level depends heavily on the head's ability to interpret, communicate, and adapt these policies to the local context through effective stakeholder engagement – a core SI function (Rahman & Saeed, 2023).

In the unique context of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), characterized by diverse geography (including remote mountainous areas), distinct sociocultural norms, post conflict sensitivities, evolving gender dynamics in education, and persistent resource constraints, the demands on school heads are particularly acute (Hussain, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). Heads must navigate intricate community relationships, mediate cultural nuances, advocate effectively within bureaucratic systems, and inspire staff often working in challenging conditions. Success in these endeavors hinges critically on their social intelligence.

Statement of the Problem

Social intelligence, encompassing empathy, communication skills, and relationship management, is crucial for effective leadership in educational settings. School heads play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment, influencing teacher morale, and ultimately impacting student outcomes. Despite its importance, there is a paucity of research examining the social intelligence of school heads, particularly in the context of AJ&K. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the social intelligence of secondary school heads in AJ&K, comparing the differences between male and female heads. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the social intelligence of school heads and inform strategies for enhancing leadership effectiveness in secondary schools. So the current study aimed to address this problem under the title "Comparative study of social intelligence among secondary school heads in AJ&K".

Objective of the study

1. To determine significant difference in social intelligence of male and female secondary school heads.

Hypotheses of the study

Ho1: There is no significant difference between social intelligence of male and female heads of schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tolegenova et al. (2020) defined Social intelligence as the ability to perceive, process, and understand social information accurately. This includes recognizing social cues (verbal and nonverbal), understanding social situations, norms, and rules, and forming accurate mental models of others' thoughts, intentions, beliefs, and emotions. Amarneh et al., (2023) stated that the social intelligence is the capacity to use social understanding and awareness to navigate social situations effectively, build and maintain relationships, influence others positively, resolve conflicts, and communicate appropriately.

Sofi et al., (2022) found that social intelligence not merely as a supplementary skill but as a core driver of effective leadership, moving beyond technical expertise to emphasize the critical human dimension of leading schools. While acknowledging its overlap with emotional intelligence (EI), the literature underscores SI's distinct focus on the interpersonal and contextual application of understanding within the unique social ecosystem of educational institutions. This involves accurately perceiving group dynamics, organizational culture, unspoken norms, and power structures. Effective educational leaders demonstrate SI through accurate social perception of staff morale, student needs, and parent concerns; contextual adaptability in adjusting communication and approach for diverse audiences and situations; the cultivation of genuine relationships and psychological safety; and influential communication that motivates, persuades, and resolves conflicts.

Raducu and Stanciu (2023) depicted that SI is crucial for cultivating a positive school climate and inclusive culture, enabling leaders to manage diverse perspectives, celebrate achievements, and address negative behaviors in ways that strengthen the overall sense of community. The ability to navigate resistance, mediate various disputes and lead complex change initiatives effectively also hinges on core SI competencies like social perception and behavioral flexibility. Finally, building and sustaining trust social intelligence based relationships with critical stakeholders, including parents, the community, and district officials, relies heavily on the leader's SI to communicate sensitively, understand diverse viewpoints, and manage expectations.

Gilar (2020) highlighted that leaders are now required to adeptly interpret tone and nuance in technology social intelligence mediated communication such as emails, messaging apps, and virtual meetings. Managing online communities like parent forums or staff groups, navigating digital citizenship issues, and leveraging technology effectively to build and maintain relationships remotely demand specific adaptations of traditional SI skills. SI involves understanding the unique social norms, potential misunderstandings, and communication pitfalls inherent in digital interactions within the school context.

Liu and Wang (2023) described that secondary school heads operate within a dense web of relationships requiring sophisticated social navigation. Building trust and collaboration among a diverse faculty with varying expertise, experience levels, and perspectives demands high levels of SI. Heads must accurately perceive staff morale, provide constructive feedback sensitively, mediate interpersonal conflicts fairly, and inspire collective effort towards shared goals. Beyond the school walls, heads must also manage complex relationships with parents, who are often deeply invested and sometimes anxious about their adolescent children's futures. SI enables heads to communicate effectively with parents from diverse

backgrounds, manage expectations, address concerns diplomatically, and build partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding, even in difficult conversations.

Kumar (2023) found that the creation and sustenance of a positive, inclusive, and productive school climate is another core responsibility heavily dependent on the head's SI. A socially intelligent leader understands the subtle dynamics of the school's culture its norms, power structures, and unspoken rules. They can sense underlying tensions, celebrate achievements in ways that resonate, and proactively address issues like bullying, discrimination, or low morale before they escalate. By modeling respectful interaction, fostering psychological safety and skillfully managing group dynamics within staff meetings, student assemblies, and parent councils, the head sets the social tone for the entire institution.

Jones (2015) illustrated that SI is also paramount in conflict resolution and change management, inevitable aspects of secondary school leadership. Whether mediating disputes between staff members, students, or parents, or implementing significant curricular or policy changes, heads rely on their SI to understand multiple perspectives, manage emotional responses, communicate the rationale for change persuasively, navigate resistance constructively, and find solutions that maintain relationships while moving the school forward.

Comparison of Male and Female Principals regarding Social intelligence

Javed and Shahid (2020) found that female leaders are often subject to societal expectations that they naturally excel in relational and empathetic aspects of SI (e.g., nurturing, collaboration, emotional support). Conversely, male leaders might be expected to demonstrate SI more through decisiveness, authority, and strategic influence. These stereotypes can shape how the SI behaviors of male and female heads are social intelligence perceived social intelligence by staff, students, parents, and even superiors.

Green and Patel (2023) indicated that female leaders, including heads, may place relatively greater emphasis on collaborative relationship social intelligence building, consensus social intelligence seeking, and fostering inclusive climates aspects heavily reliant on social awareness and relationship management facets of SI. Male leaders might sometimes demonstrate SI more through navigating organizational politics, building strategic alliances, and influencing stakeholders at higher levels, leveraging social perceptiveness and behavioral adaptability differently.

Ferris (2017) highlighted that SI behaviors can depend heavily on the specific school culture, the nature of the challenge (e.g., handling a bullying crisis vs. negotiating a budget), and the existing demographic makeup of the staff and community. A female head's collaborative approach might be highly effective in one school culture but perceived as weak in another context demanding overt authority. Similarly, a male head's direct communication style might resolve some issues efficiently but escalate others if perceived as lacking empathy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was descriptive and quantitative in nature to get results cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data. The total population of the study was 111 included both male and female head of secondary schools in district Rawalakot AJ&K. In the total population 55 were males and 56 were the female heads of high schools. Stratified random sampling technique was used to make two strata of the population for the equal participation of the both genders male and female. The sample of 96 respondents was taken from the population according to Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sampling table. In the sample 48 were female heads of schools and also 48 were male head of schools. Standardized questionnaire of

Frankovsky and Brinkova (2014) was used for assessing Social intelligence which consisted of 21 items. The reliability of the instrument was checked by using Cronbach's Alpha, the value of Alpha was .970.The data was collected by means of personal visits, by post and personal contact with respondents. To analyze data Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used independent sample t-test was applied on data to get results.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 1
Independent sample t-test regarding gender of respondents and social intelligence

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	t	Sig
Social intelligence	Male	48	2.71	-4.505	.00
	Female	48	3.61		

The table 1 depicted the independent sample t-test of respondents' gender and their situational leadership styles. The table 1 revealed that the mean score of male respondents was 2.71 and N=48 and the mean score of female respondents was 3.61 and N=48 revealing that males had the lower mean score than females, the value of t=-4.505 showed the difference of variability between groups, the Sig value was .00<0.05 illustrated that the difference between the mean scores of male and female respondents regarding social intelligence was statistically significant. Hence it was cleared from the table 1 that female head of schools had high level of social intelligence in schools than male heads of schools so it was cleared that Null hypothesis Ho1 there is no significant difference between social intelligence of male and female heads of schools was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The main target of the study was to analyze the social intelligence of the heads of the secondary schools regarding their gender. This study investigated that female heads of schools were exhibiting more social intelligence in schools than the male heads of schools the results got similarity with the study of Smith and Johnson (2022) who also found that female heads scored significantly higher in social intelligence. Results of this study were also aligned with the study of Brown and Davis (2021) which depicted that female heads outperformed males in social intelligence domains but in contrast to results of current study Garcia (2022) found that secondary school male heads scored marginally higher in social intelligence than female heads, same was found by Wilson and Thompson (2023) that male heads depicted higher social intelligence than female heads.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the study entitled "Comparative study of social intelligence among secondary school heads in AJ&K". The study depicted the important difference of social intelligence regarding gender and the findings of the study illustrated that female heads of schools were depicting and using higher level of social intelligence than male heads of schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Department of Elementary and Secondary education AJ&K should organize specific training module and social emotional learning program for male heads to uplift their abilities of social intelligence like female heads of secondary schools.

2. Department of education should ensure equal opportunities of professional developments for both male and females to reduce gender gap regarding social intelligence.
3. Department should provide continuous professional development to heads of schools to meet their current leading responsibilities in schools.
4. Policy makers should ensure the equal training opportunities, gender equity and continues professional development to uplift the leadership qualities of school heads.
5. Government should allocate resources to support those policies which improve the social intelligence of school heads.

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