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**Exploring the Relationship Between Strategic Decision-Making
and Perseverance in Secondary School Leadership**



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Abstract

The research examined the correlation between strategic decision-making and perseverance in the leadership of secondary schools in District Gujrat, Pakistan. Self-developed instruments to measure the two constructs were used in a quantitative correlational research design. The sample size included 250 secondary school heads (125 males and 125 females) out of 325 head teachers was chosen through random sampling. Descriptive statistics was used to find the measures of the strategic decision-making and perseverance, and Pearson correlation was presented to investigate the association between the variables. The results showed that the male heads and female heads were moderate to high in terms of strategic decision making and perseverance. Moreover, the findings showed that there was a strong positive correlation existing between strategic decision-making and perseverance which implied that school leaders who had better strategic decision-making abilities had a higher chance of portraying perseverance in leadership. The paper concludes that encouraging the strategizing decision-making abilities can make secondary school heads more perseverant, thus adding to more effective and resilient school leadership. It was recommended that leadership training, gender-inclusive support, and policy-level initiatives be enhanced as ways of strengthening educational leadership practices.

Keywords: Strategic decision-making, Perseverance, School leadership, Secondary school heads, Correlational study

Introduction

Educational leadership is an important phenomenon in determining organizational effectiveness, achievement by students and teacher motivation. Perseverance is one of the many characteristics of a good leader that enables school administrators to stick to their vision, solve their problems and maintain lasting changes in their schools. As a crucial psychological asset, perseverance, which can be defined as prolonged effort and perseverance in the face of adversity, helps leaders to complete complicated administrative chores and apply reforms (Duckworth et al., 2007; Credé, 2018). In the realm of secondary education, where the demands of the stakeholders, government authorities, and communities are growing, perseverance is the only key to keeping

everything moving forward and guaranteeing the quality of the education (Day and Gu, 2013).

One of the aspects that determine perseverance is the ability of the leader to make strategic decisions. Strategic decision-making can be defined as a quality of analyzing circumstances, foreseeing difficulties, and making knowledgeable choices, which are consistent with the organizational objectives. In the case of secondary school heads, this can be made up of decisions on management of the curriculum, allocation of resources, teacher development, and student welfare. Strategic decision-making also helps the leaders respond to the evolving educational environments, deal with crises, and prioritize conflicting demands (Hayes et al., 2019). A strategic approach to school leadership ensures that the leaders maintain perseverance due to the fact that their decisions are supported by clarity of vision and long-term planning and not impulsiveness.

Psychological and organizational theories could explain the connection between the decision-making and perseverance. The capacity of leaders to regulate stress, assess alternatives and be able to maintain motivation through strategic decision-making leads to perseverance (Mintzberg, 2006). Organizational behavior studies have also shown that people possessing good decision-making abilities also exhibit greater persistence and resilience even when faced with failure (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan, 2015). In the case of education, it implies that school administrators who exhibit strategic thinking have higher chances of continuing to enhance reforms, instill discipline and meet academic objectives regardless of structural and resource related issues.

The leadership of the secondary schools in Pakistan is usually characterized by scarce resources, large student-teacher ratio, and social influences of local society (Ali and Shah, 2025). These conditions demand school heads to be technically savvy and, what is more, perseverant enough to keep the progress going. Nonetheless, perseverance cannot be viewed in a vacuum since it is affected by cognitive and managerial abilities including decision-making. In spite of the relevance of this relationship, there is paucity of empirical studies in the local context to investigate the role of strategic decision-making on perseverance among leaders in secondary schools. This research, then, aims at addressing this gap by looking into the correlation

between strategic decision-making and perseverance in leadership in secondary schools. Through this relationship exploration, the research will contribute evidence on the extent to which decision-making patterns determine the capacity of leaders to endure to fulfill educational objectives. It is assumed that the results would be useful in leadership development curriculums because they would highlight the role of strategic decision-making as an indicator of perseverance. In addition, the research can guide policymakers and teacher training departments to incorporate decision-making skills teaching as part of leadership training programs to make sure that the next generation of school leaders will be fully equipped to confront challenges and will persist.

Statement of the Problem

The heads of the secondary schools have a number of obstacles that include limited resources, curriculum reforms, accountability issues, and community expectations and all these demands perseverance- the ability to stay strong and stay focused on long-term objectives in the face of challenges. The ability to endure reforms and guarantee school improvement is vital but it goes depending on the managerial competencies of the leaders. Strategic choice-making that entails assessment of alternatives, prioritization, and coordination of actions in line with organizational objectives can be central in enhancing perseverance. Strong decision-making leaders will be more consistent to continue despite obstacles whereas poor decision-makers would lower consistency and commitment. In Pakistan, the heads of secondary schools are subjected to challenging conditions characterized by overpopulation, low funding and social forces. Nevertheless, little empirical literature has investigated the role of strategic decision-making in this regard in promoting perseverance. This knowledge gap limits the potential of policymakers and training institutions to develop effective school leaders. Thus, the paper aims to examine the linkage between strategic decision-making and perseverance in the minds of heads of secondary schools to offer insights that would be useful in upholding leadership behaviors and advancing learning outcomes.

Research Objectives

- A. To determine the degree of strategic decision-making skill amongst secondary school heads.

- B. To identify the extent of perseverance of secondary school heads.
- C. To determine the correlation between strategic decision-making and perseverance in secondary school leadership.

Research Questions

- A. What are the strategic decision-making capabilities of secondary school heads?
- B. How persistent are secondary school heads?
- C. Does strategic decision-making have a correlation with perseverance in secondary school leadership?

Review of Literature

One of the fundamental psychological strengths of leaders is perseverance, which helps them stay faithful to long-term agenda regardless of the problems, failures, or setbacks. Perseverance in education has been said to be the backbone of school leadership since school heads work in a place where there is continuous reforms, change of policies, scarcer resources and social pressures. Endurance in leadership is not only associated with an ability to withstand the hardship but also a focus, hope, and steadfast work to achieve institutional expansion and student achievement.

According to several researches, perseverance is closely associated with resilience, grit, and goal-oriented behavior (Credé, 2018; Hodge et al., 2018). Perseverance among leaders is likely to lead to the development of adaptive coping skills that enable leaders to survive criticism, overcome resistance by teachers or parents, and to stay devoted to reform efforts. Perseverance can be experienced in the case of secondary schools where school heads carry on with the process of quality improvement despite shortage of resources, staff attrition or disciplinary problems among students. Day and Gu (2013) believe that leaders who have perseverance will better maintain teacher morale and student performance during testing periods. Besides, perseverance in leadership is regarded as a forecast of institutional stability, long-term policy execution, and organizational development. One of the most important aspects of an effective educational leadership is strategic decision-making. Strategic decisions do not require a routine decision-making process and are instead long-term, high-stakes and made under uncertainty conditions. Some of the strategic decision-making tasks that secondary school heads have to address are broad and include curriculum planning, recruitment and training of teachers, conflict

management, adoption of technologies and budget, and communication with stakeholders. Strategic thinking and making informed choices allow school leaders to match their daily practice with the institutional goals and vision of the future.

According to Eisenhardt and Zbaracki (1992), strategic decision-making is a practice that involves integration of rational thinking, intuition and situational interpretation. In the educational setting, the leaders with a good decision-making ability find it easier to foresee issues, weigh-out options, and put measures into action that foster long-term change. Balanced information and experience are needed in making effective decisions. As an example, school heads that interpret student performance data prior to implementing new methods of teaching have higher chances of attaining lasting results.

Strategic decision making is particularly important in the setting of the secondary schools since school heads are required to grapple with various issues like curriculum reforms, school expectations, and social developments. Studies indicate that teachers and students are expected to embrace reforms and also feel motivated when their leaders adopt systematic and participatory methods of making decisions (Elbanna and Abdel-Maksoud, 2020). Moreover, strategic thinking leaders are also more successful in crisis management which has gained more significance in the post-pandemic educational environment.

The relationship between strategic decision-making and perseverance is that, intentional and well-organized choices give leaders direction in their lives, which helps them be able to stick to it. Such leaders are also less prone to discouragement by the setbacks since they make thoughtful decisions, and they have an outline of the direction of goals. This direction leads to perseverance because leaders get to know not only where they are working to but also how they can do so (Papadakis and others, 1998).

Research in organizational psychology shows that persistence, resilience and leadership success are positively correlated with successful decision-making processes (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan, 2017). To illustrate this point, a school head who takes calculated steps in coming up with a reform initiative is better placed to soldier on when difficulties occur since the move is supported by evidence and stakeholder participation. On the other hand, rash and unthought through decisions

may result to frustration and the throwing up of hand in efforts hence exposing perseverance.

Perseverance and decision-making have mutual interaction in the education setting, which has a direct impact on school performance. Strategic decision-makers tend to be more confident and this enhances their perseverance in crises. Caniëls and Baaten (2019) underscore the fact that resilience and perseverance is strengthened when leaders are actively involved in structurally oriented decision-making contexts that foster learning and adaptation. Bush (2020) also makes the argument that strategic decision making allows educational leaders to approach policy reforms and accountability demands by being determined and persistent, which is why perseverance is not only a personal attribute but also a leadership skill which can be developed through proper decision-making.

Even though persistence and prudent decision-making have been widely examined in the field of organizational and corporate leadership, their relation to each other in the educational leadership area has not been thoroughly investigated. A large part of the research on school leadership undertaken in developing nations has been on leadership styles, teacher motivation, or student achievement. A relative paucity of research has been done on the role of cognitive and managerial capability like decision-making as predictors of psychological capabilities like perseverance. In Pakistan, secondary school heads struggle with issues like underfunding, lack of teachers and great expectations of the society, and perseverance is required to maintain the effectiveness of schools. However, there is not much information regarding how the level of perseverance depends on the decision-making strategies of school leaders.

This research aims at filling this gap by investigating the association between strategic decision-making and perseverance among secondary school heads. Exploring this relationship, the paper leads to the contribution to the field of leadership research as perseverance is not only an individual trait but a developmental and reinforcing professional skill, like the strategic decision-making. The results will be useful to policy makers, teacher training institutions and school administrators in that the results will contribute to research and practice in educational leadership.

Research Methodology

The research design used was a quantitative correlational study to test the hypothesis that strategic decision-making is a predictor of perseverance of secondary school heads. All government secondary school heads in District Gujrat, Pakistan, (325 total) were considered as the target population. Head teachers (250) were randomly selected and there was an equal distribution of male and female heads. The respondents were also obliged to be actively engaged in school governance and decision making. This size is adequate to carry out a correlational and regression analysis but also provide a statistic reliability and validity.

Instrumentation

In this study, the measurement of strategic decision-making and perseverance was done using self-developed instruments among the heads of secondary schools. The Strategic Decision-Making Questionnaire was created to evaluate goal-setting, planning, problem analysis and prioritizing, whereas the Perseverance Questionnaire measured persistence, resilience and driving tenacity in other leadership positions. The two instruments employed a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), whereby higher scores were indicative of greater degrees of the respective traits. The instruments were expert tested as to content and clarity and there was pilot study to ensure contextual appropriateness and understanding. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability, and alpha higher than 0.80 is good internal consistency.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. These levels of strategic decision-making and perseverance of secondary school heads were summarized using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. In order to test the association between the variables, the correlation coefficient of Pearson was determined. All the statistical tests were conducted through the SPSS software, and $p < 0.05$ was used as the significance level.

Table 1: Strategic Decision-Making Skills among Secondary Schools Heads

Variable	Gender	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategic Decision-Making	Male	125	2.60	4.80	3.27	.66
	Female	125	2.00	4.73	3.11	.53
	Overall	250	2.00	4.80	3.19	0.60

Table 1 indicates the average scores of strategic decision-making skills between boys and girls secondary school heads. The mean score was a little higher among male heads ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.66$) than female heads ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.53$). The mean score ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.60$) can be considered a moderate level of strategic decision-making skills of the heads. The disparity implies that male heads will show greater strategic decision-making abilities as compared to their female counterparts, and both parties are within the same range.

Table 2: Level of Perseverance among Secondary Schools Heads

Variable	Gender	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perseverance	Male	125	2.33	4.20	3.06	.37
	Female	125	1.20	4.20	3.07	.38
	Overall	250	1.20	4.20	3.06	0.38

Table 2 shows the degree of perseverance by male and female heads of secondary schools. As per the results, male heads scored in mean perseverance of 3.06 ($SD = 0.37$), whereas female heads scored in mean perseverance of 3.07 ($SD = 0.38$). The total mean value ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.38$) indicates a moderate degree of perseverance between all heads. Contrary to the strategic decision-making, no significant difference between the male and female heads is identified in terms of perseverance, which implies that both groups show the same degree of persistence and resilience in their leadership positions.

Table 3: Relationship Between Strategic Decision-Making and Perseverance in Secondary School Leadership (N=250)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Strategic Decision-Making	3.19	0.60	1	.665**
2. Perseverance	3.06	0.38	.665**	1

Table 3 indicates the connection between strategic decision-making and perseverance among the heads of secondary school. Correlation analysis shows that the relationship between the two variables is positive ($r = .665$, $p < .01$). This is an implication that increased levels of strategic decision making are strongly correlated with increased levels of perseverance. That is, the heads who have a high level of skills in strategic decision-making will tend to practice persistence and resilience in their leadership. The results point to the fact that perseverance in leadership in secondary schools is significantly predicted by good decision-making.

Table 4: Relationship Between Strategic Decision-Making and Perseverance in Male Secondary School Leadership (N=125)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Strategic Decision-Making	3.27	0.66	1	.713**
2. Perseverance	3.06	0.37	.713**	1

Table 4 shows the relationship between strategic decision-making and perseverance among male secondary school heads. The findings indicate a high positive relationship between the two variables ($r = .713$, $p < .01$). This means that male heads who portray greater skills in strategic decision-making are also highly exhibited in terms of perseverance. The value of the correlation is also high, which indicates a dominant role of strategic decision-making in the predictability of perseverance among male school leaders focusing on the role of decision-making competence in maintaining persistence and resilience in the leadership positions.

Table 5: Relationship Between Strategic Decision-Making and Perseverance in Female Secondary School Leadership (N=125)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Strategic Decision-Making	3.11	0.53	1	.639**
2. Perseverance	3.07	0.38	.639**	1

As indicated in Table 5, strategic decision-making is related with perseverance among female secondary school heads. The findings show that there is a strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .639$, $p < .01$). This indicates that those female heads who have more skills in strategic decision making are also more persevering in their leadership positions. Despite the fact that the correlation is a bit less than that between male heads ($r = .713$), it nonetheless indicates a significant and meaningful relationship. This suggests that strategy decision making continues to be a noteworthy predictor of perseverance in female leaders, and this aspect of decision-making ability relates to developing resilience and persistence regardless of gender.

Conclusions

The results of the research showed that the heads of the secondary schools exhibited some moderate degree of strategic decision-making skills and perseverance, which presupposes the availability of the necessary leadership qualities that could be improved further. The decision-making capabilities of male heads were slightly higher than those of female heads and there was also no significant difference in the levels of perseverance between males and females. There was a high positive correlation between strategic decision-making and the perseverance, which implies that effective leaders in strategic decision-making are also highly likely to endure when faced with difficulties. This was more pronounced within the case of both male and female heads but to a larger degree with male heads and that is the need to make strategic decisions as one of the major elements that help in nurturing perseverance and enhancing leadership in schools.

Discussion

The findings of the present research indicate that the interconnection between strategic decision-making and perseverance is important among secondary school heads. The results align with the previous literature that highlights that successful

leadership revolves around successful decision-making because it allows school leaders to establish effective directions, resource allocation, and proactive solutions to challenges (Aydin& Özmutaf, 2021; Hitt and Tucker, 2016). Perseverance, which can be described as one of the dimensions of grit, has been found to increase the ability of leaders to keep their eyes on the prize despite challenges (Duckworth et al., 2007; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). The correlation between strategic decision-making and perseverance is positive, which implies that critical and strategic-thinking heads are also more resilient and willpower in pursuing institutional goals. Interestingly, the strategic decision-making abilities of male heads were a bit higher, but there were no radical differences between gender, and the levels of perseverance were comparably equal, which is consistent with the literature indicating that there may not be a significant difference in gender as an element of leadership styles (Carli and Eagly, 2011). These findings highlight the need to incorporate decision-making and perseverance training into school head leadership development programs because the two attributes are necessary in overcoming the burdens of the modern-day education systems.

Recommendations

The heads of the secondary schools should be trained in workshops to enhance their skills of strategic decision making, especially the problem solving, critical thinking, and long term planning. Strategies to develop perseverance and resilience should be included in professional development programs and help school leaders stay dedicated in spite of difficulties. Both male and female heads should be given equal opportunities and support systems to improve their leadership efficiency so that they develop equally in terms of their strategic thinking and perseverance. The education authorities ought to develop policies that promote evidence-based decision-making behaviour among the school heads, along with the mentoring program to facilitate persistence in meeting the institutions objectives.

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