



## Factors Affecting the Female School Principals' (in Pakistan) Leadership and Management Styles

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### Abstract

*The number of female teachers and principals in Pakistan, in both public and private sectors, has significantly increased. However, there are very few studies that have focused on how female principals lead and manage their schools, as well as the factors influencing their leadership behaviors and practices. The study aims to investigate the barriers and factors that affect women's leadership and management styles in the context of Pakistan. The research collected data from school principals from three major cities of Pakistan: Rawalpindi-Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi. The individual interviews were conducted online using Zoom and Google Meet. Research participants were selected through a convenience sampling strategy. The interview data was analyzed and categorized into themes such as family and peer support, social, cultural, and religious associations, and their influence on school principals' perspectives and leadership value systems. This study finds a connection between family and peer support and their influence on the transition of teachers into school principals. This study also found that the social, cultural, and religious belief systems also contributed to the growth of female principals' development and played a crucial role in nurturing their leadership skills.*

**Keywords:** Educational leadership, school Principal, religious association, family, social value system



## **Introduction**

South Asia is a unique region of the world, it is home to myriad cultures and traditions. Geographically, it comprises only 10% of the Asian continent, yet nearly 40% of the total Asian population and 25% of the global population reside in this area. Another factor that sets it apart from other parts of the world is the demographic distribution of the population. A significant portion of the population is made up of young people, while the percentage of elderly individuals is less than 20% (Mujahid & Siddhisena, 2009). This study also found a trend of preferring male children over female children, but this has been changing. Currently, the gap between the male and female populations is insignificant (World Bank, 2019, 2022). This dataset also indicates that the number of individuals aged between 18 and 40 has been increasing in the region. It reveals that the number of young females in this age group is nearly half of the total young population.

Pakistan like the whole South Asian region has seen an increasing number of girls enrolling in the formal education system as the government of Pakistan increased the state budget on access to education, and also the funding received from different multilateral agencies, focusing specially on girls' education (Naviwala, 2016). The increase in funding contributed to opening new schools for girls and higher education and teacher training institutes for young women to provide trained female teacher educators and female teachers in female-only universities and teacher education institutes. Many of the women also join the co-education school, colleges and universities and their numbers jumped from a few administrative staff to teaching positions, especially in the social sciences, humanities, behavioral science and arts faculties (Khokhar, 2020). They still face numerous challenges in their promotion to higher administrative positions in co-educational schools and colleges and if promoted to higher positions, challenges from their peers, families and society.

## **Purpose of Study**

Literature suggests that women's leadership in Pakistan is extremely important, and various factors influence women's leadership, such as culture, social differences, and economic factors (Ali & Rasheed, 2021). Religious institutions and organizational culture also shape their leadership behaviors and practices towards male and female counterparts, are part of their tradition and heritage. The purpose of this research is to study the factors influencing female



school principals' leadership behaviors and practices in their schools. Additionally, the study aims to trace their journey to reaching this position and examine how this journey has shaped their perspectives on their leadership styles. Women need equal opportunities in educational institutions to prove themselves as effective education leaders and managers. The purpose of this narrative study is to discover barriers that prevent Pakistani women from attaining higher leadership and managerial positions, despite the increasing number of women taking up teaching positions in schools.

### **Literature Review**

Pakistan has witnessed an increase in the number of women entering the education profession due to the growth of private schooling systems in the country. These women are not only serving as teachers but also taking up various leadership positions. A study conducted by Gallup Pakistan in 2023 (Gallup Pakistan, 2023) analyzed the data collected by the Bureau of Statistics of the Government of Pakistan (2021) between 2010 and 2020 and found a significant increase in the number of female teachers at primary (57.3%), middle (72.8%), and high school (61.2%) levels across the three formal schooling levels. This study also revealed a significant change in the female employment rate in tertiary education. Women now accounted for nearly 27% of the staff at the higher secondary or college level (as defined in Pakistan) and almost 40% in higher education institutions offering Bachelor's and advanced degrees. The GoP (2017, 2021) data does not provide any information on the number of females in leadership positions and still there are no official figures on the number of females leading or managing public and private educational institutions at all levels. Though it is understood that girls-only primary, secondary, higher secondary schools and universities have female leaders. There are very few instances of women leading educational institutions that serve both male and female students, as these positions are predominantly held by men.

Studies have found that although the female population in South Asia is nearly equal to the male population (51% male and 49% female), the participation of females in the job market and educational institutions is significantly lower compared to their male counterparts. However, there have been signs of slow progress, with an increase in female participation in the job market and educational institutions. This has opened up job opportunities for females that were previously reserved for males only. But it is also true that the majority of women continue to be



employed in the informal sector, earning far less than their male coworkers (Strachan & Adikaram, 2023). The traditional roles for women were in teaching and the medical profession, but these sectors have seen very few women reaching top leadership positions or middle-level leadership positions.

The studies from Pakistan (Sarwar & Imran, 2019; Sohail, Rehman, & Rehman, 2019; Tanaka & Muzones, 2016) have found that there are more females in the educational and health sector as these professions are considered safe for women. Though this trend is changing, and women have started choosing professions other than education, and health but these two are still the most favored professions by women. Studies have found that women still face hurdles to making professional choices as they are still made by the men in the families and mostly these decisions are made keeping in mind the factors of safety and balance between work and family chores such as looking after children and doing domestic chores. The men in the family discourage women from choosing professions that might affect their carrying out these two responsibilities (Abbasi & Sarwat, 2014; Arif, Ejaz & Yousaf, 2017).

A school leader's functions are listed as organizing, supervising, planning, making decisions, managing finances and performing miscellaneous managerial responsibilities. The leadership style of school leadership not just influences the motivational level of teachers but also their job satisfaction, creating a conducive teaching learning environment in schools (Sentočnik & Rupar, 2009). Two perspectives of leadership, trait view and process view, are presented by Northouse (2010; 2015). The former suggests that leadership is a built-in characteristic and skills which cannot be learned and taught while the latter perspective inferred that a leader influences others and is influenced by followers suggesting that the leadership skills are always under-construction because of the continuous interactions between the leader and the followers. Mulford (2008) argued that though each of the leadership style has its own advantages yet the school Principals could use a flexible leadership style, composed of elements chosen from different leadership styles.

Previous empirical research highlights three fundamental leadership styles commonly utilized by principals in developing countries: autocratic, democratic or participative, and laissez-faire or free-rein leadership styles (Saleem et al., 2020). Autocratic leadership, characterized by centralized decision-making and control, often contrasts sharply with democratic or participative



leadership, which involves staff in decision-making processes and fosters a collaborative work environment. Laissez-faire leadership, on the other hand, allows staff significant autonomy and minimal direct supervision. According to Mumford et al. (2006), many leaders opt for participatory and directive forms of leadership, advocating for the cultivation of democratic leadership styles as more effective alternatives to autocratic and laissez-faire approaches. This view aligns with the idea that school leadership can drive school improvement and reform by using or combining different leadership styles, such as democratic, autocratic, task-oriented, collegial, or transformational (Allensworth, Sebastian, & Gordon, 2020; Hosseingholizadeh et al., 2021). The conceptual model of school leadership proposed by Phuc et al. (2020) incorporates instructional, transformational, and moral leadership to enhance school efficacy and teacher job performance. Instructional leadership, as Marks and Printy (2003) describe, focuses on the curriculum, teaching, and assessment, positioning the principal as the primary source of educational expertise aimed at standardizing effective teaching practices and maintaining high expectations. Transformational leadership, in contrast, casts the leader as a visionary who provides intellectual direction and fosters innovation within the organization. Effective leadership in schools, therefore, necessitates mastering various approaches, including behavioral, trait, and skills-based methods, and adapting one's leadership style to meet the specific needs of different situations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021).

Expanding on these leadership frameworks, Knight (2024) identifies six leadership styles in business organizations: coercive, authoritative, pacesetter, affiliative, democratic, and coaching. These styles are relevant to educational contexts, as they provide a diverse toolkit for school principals to draw upon. Waheed, Hussin, Khan, Ghavifekr, and Bahadur (2019) identify instructional, transformational, and moral leadership styles in schools, each with distinct advantages and challenges. Instructional leadership focuses on curriculum and teaching practices, with the principal acting as the primary source of educational guidance to ensure high standards. Transformational leadership involves inspiring and intellectually stimulating staff to innovate and improve. Moral leadership emphasizes ethical practices and values in decision-making. Additionally, distributive leadership decentralizes leadership roles, spreading responsibilities across the school rather than centralizing them in the principal's office. Transactional leadership involves a system of rewards and exchanges, motivating teachers and staff through incentives for compliance with school policies and performance standards. This



style is sometimes referred to as corrective or authoritative leadership, where the principal maintains control and directs all tasks (Chan & Chan, 2005; Coleman, 2000). The necessity for principals to employ a versatile and context-sensitive approach to leadership becomes evident, blending different styles to effectively manage and lead their schools towards improvement and reform. By integrating these varied leadership styles, school leaders can address the complex challenges they face and foster a more dynamic and responsive educational environment.

Academics around the world have found a connection between the Principals and their leadership styles with effective teaching and learning in schools; students achieving the desired learning outcomes, and teachers meeting the teaching standards set by the schools and the state authorities; contribute to making the school a suitable place to teach (for teachers), to learn (for students) and for growth and development (for both students and teachers) and contributing to the community (Darling-Hammond, Wechsler, Levin, & Tozer, 2022; Kalkan, Altınay Aksal, Altınay Gazi, Atasoy, & Dağlı, 2020). It is also true that “Principals’ feelings of preparedness and their engagement in more effective practices” contribute to “teacher retention and improved student achievement” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022, p. vi), important factors to measure a school’s effectiveness.

There are many studies (Imhangbe et al., 2018; Khan, 2020 and Saleem et al., 2020) that showed found a link between Principals’ leadership style and teaching effectiveness and teaching learning environment in schools. The Principals have a significant impact on teachers’ instructional and non-instructional performance, which is a direct factor in students’ achievement (Leithwood, 2021). Interventions to improve teachers’ work performance and help them deal with institutional problems usually include school leadership’s direction-setting, counselling services, mentoring, coaching, and faculty development (Saleem et al., 2020). Tomlinson (2013) and Phuc et al. (2020) both state that good leaders prepare their instructors for future problems and vision. School Principals made efforts to improve teachers’ competence by giving them more autonomy in the classroom. The importance of educational progress across the world is likely bolstered by these two interconnected factors.

The academics studying women in academic leadership positions and their leadership behaviors, practices, and styles in Pakistani schools, found the influence of patriarchal social structure and their religious and social conditions shape female school Principals’ leadership styles. Though



these studies have mostly focused on colleges and higher education institutes. (Ali & Rasheed, 2021; Mansoor & Bano, 2022) and very few studies focused on female school Principals. The studies on the one hand presumed that Pakistani women leaders' leadership styles are reflective of the enactment of patriarchal feminism "replicating masculinist practices of exclusion" while on the other hand, they became a "substitute Big Bad Wolf for their women coworkers" (Mansoor & Bano, 2022, p. 1). This was reflected in the dependence of female school Principals on the male administrative staff who influenced most of the decisions taken by the principals, administrative and financial. It is also true that women's limited access to leadership roles in Pakistani educational institutions makes it a complex phenomenon to study and warrants researchers to study it.

The studies focusing on women's access to leadership roles and their leadership styles found various factors hampering their contribution as leaders, such as lack of training to manage the financial and human resources, lack of role models they could consult during crisis-like situations, and also some gender-based stereotype (Bhatti & Ali, 2020). Moreover, various workplace issues restrict women from engaging in leadership roles, such as gender discrimination, workplace harassment, and intimidation, however, some factors facilitate women's leadership roles and encourage their appointment as educational institute's leaders. It is commonly perceived that women do not need to equip themselves with the academic and professional qualifications that would support them in their promotion to higher positions in educational institutes because this would affect their work as wives, daughters, and mothers, that is, to look after and manage their houses. This perception by the men in the family hinders women enrolled in graduate and postgraduate programs from aiming for higher positions in their respective fields, including schools, colleges, and institutes of higher education (Khokhar, 2018). Women also face many socio-cultural barriers to acquiring education and achieving desired higher leadership positions as equal to men. Over the past few decades, women have contributed a lot in the field of education which is reflected in the number of women working in the education sector. Traditionally, Pakistani men and women alike have seen teaching jobs as safe and suitable for women because this enables women to dedicate the needed number of hours to complete household chores. Teaching has traditionally been considered a suitable job for women due to its nature as a caring profession. Newman (1994) argues that teaching is "a caring



profession as it is associated with the motherly aspects of women” (p. 193) and that teaching attributes such as ‘caring’, ‘creative’ and ‘intuitive’ are associated with women. Despite these being considered typical female attributes, Pakistani women still face many barriers in the field of education to prove themselves as educational leaders and managers.

Leadership is considered an important research area in social science, yet there is no unified definition of leadership rather the concept of leadership is viewed as a discursive lens. The only thing that the leadership phenomenon could do when it sprang from the prison of rigidity was to characterize leaders as those who transform others. Sinclair and Lips-Wiersma (2007), however, disagree, arguing that individuals who want to alter others may treat those they attempt to change as objects. whereby they rouse people to uncover deeper, more fulfilling ways to collaborate It is also suggested that leadership is a crucial domain in research that cannot be studied in fixed parameters, rather, contextual and situational factors are of utmost importance (Ford, 2010). Leadership is mostly associated with a leading position linked with the male gender, however, with the rise of women’s rights and feminist movement, the debate is mostly confined to ‘masculine and ‘feminine leadership’ concepts of leadership. Educational organizations still lack equal leadership opportunities for women, and organizations have taken steps to address this phenomenon. (Madsen & Andrade, 2018). On the one hand, the convergence of several identities, rather than just ‘gender’ is what hinders or enhances leadership productivity, while on the other hand, these identities also exist in perceptions, which are referred to as preconceptions regarding female leaders.

A study by Schuh et al., (2014) found that female leaders face difficulty in leading and displaying power when compared to male leaders and this was attributed to cultural differences and social norms. It was also found that some cultures not only prevent women leaders from practicing their powers but also close their career academic and professional growth, leaving no space for progression in their careers (Cheryan, Master, & Meltzoff, 2015). Leadership emerged to influence others; thus, it inspired leaders to show power and authority, and women with no power and authority in a societal structure, hampered their hamper day-to-day activities, household as well as professional. In some cases, when this stereotype becomes a social norm, it becomes a threat to female leaders’ use of leadership knowledge, skills, and experiences, and for this, they are judged as lacking in leadership skills.





Religion, religious beliefs, and religious affiliation also impact the leadership styles of both male and female academic leaders. The studies on Muslim and Christian leadership styles and their impact on academic leaders also revealed that individuals with strong religious beliefs are more inclined to work in the public services sector such as health, education social services, etc. They practice goal-oriented leadership and their relational style of political leadership, facilitate their fine-tuning of their potentials and their leadership styles to adjust their surroundings, contributing to their abilities to become “effective and efficient in achieving their goals despite the limitations resulting from external systemic conditionalities” (Brzezińska, 2023, p. 1). The women leaders with strong religious belief systems believed that their religion was not an obstacle to their assuming the leadership position and their religious affiliation and religious knowledge and practices shaped their leadership value system. The female leaders found their religion and their religious belief system as a game changer, shaping their leadership style and practices, building their leadership capital on differences rather than eliminating them (Alkhatib & Arnout, 2019; Baqutayan & Raji, 2021; Frunza, 2017; Hage & Posner, 2015; Hamzah et al., 2016).

### **Research Questions**

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the following questions were framed:

1. What are the barriers for Pakistani women to attain higher leadership and managerial positions?
2. What is the influence of social, cultural, and religious background on the leadership style/activities of women?

### **Methodology and Procedure**

This study is a narrative study and there has been a realization that narrative study is an important epistemological tool to understand the personal experiences of people because these experiences show their identity and their personal experience must be seen and understood within a particular context (Bruner, 1990). Fifteen female Principals were initially selected as sample of the study. Later due to saturation in the responses, it was decided that the remaining Principals would not be approached. These principals were from private schools in three cities (Lahore, Karachi, and Rawalpindi-Islamabad) voluntarily participated in this study. These



female Principals were selected through snowballing strategy. The criteria of selection were those female Principals who had come up to the post of Principal from teaching side or they were at lower management post in their schools. All these women were above the age of 35 and have master's degrees in education and they have been involved in the teaching profession for more than ten years. The participants were working in private schools serving students coming from middle and lower-middle economic groups. A semi-structured interview was conducted in a friendly and pleasant environment and the focus of the questions asked in these interviews was to find out how school Principals' childhood experiences, parental influences, their educational experiences as students, their early years experiences in their workplaces, support of their families and peers contributed to shape their conceptions of leadership styles and value system of leaders. All of the research participants were given as much time as they required to narrate their experiences. The narratives were one-to-one discussions and notes made during the conversation were shared with the participant. All the precautionary measures were taken to present their experiences as narrated by them in the interviews. Every interview was transcribed simultaneously to extract similarities in the experiences. A colleague helped to identify similar codes and themes for the purpose of removing personal biasness from the analysis. Data was analyzed through open coding and thematic analysis. The findings of this study are suggestive due to the small number of research participants and should not be taken as conclusive and decisive. The analysis of the notes taken during the interviews showed many common elements in the leadership practices of the research participants such as family support, inspiration and commitment, self-confidence and ambitiousness, organizational culture, peer support, and religious beliefs.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Two major connecting threads among all the twelve participants were their childhood experiences and their study years which shaped they are not just social value system but also their leadership value set. Three participants presented their experiences as

My parents were always very positive about my educational development. My father was always worried that I would choose a respectful and profitable profession. So, I can become an independent woman. Yes, security and respect as a woman were a big concern for them. I feel



privileged to be the daughter of a family who gave me full freedom to use all my potential to attain my identity in society (Participant 1).

My father was a farmer and being a farmer, he worked hard for all his daughters including me, he taught us to work hard to get an education (Participant 6)

I was always respected and prioritized in everything as a female child. I felt blessed to be a daughter always (Participant 9)

All the participants responded differently when asked about their formal educational (school, college, and university) years. One of the participants shared her educational years as “happy and blissful” (Participant 5) because she was not only sent to good schools just like her brothers but also, she was given freedom to choose her subjects in school and university. Another participant pointed out that for her parents’, completing education was the key to opening avenues of career prospects and professional growth. All participants shared that for their parents teaching was a respectful career option for women because this would allow them to continue their professional aspirations and their family lives.

The participants emphasized that peer support is as important as their family support because they also spend quite a few hours of their lives with their peers. Though majority of the participants (eight) said that they had their peers’ support while 4 participants shared incidents demonstrating some challenging workplace experiences and difficult interactions and relationships with their peers which also resulted in their route to promotion in their schools. One participant said that,

it’s a challenge just as in the other professions; you have to stay open to new learning and let the fresh air come in, to be attentive to the needs of the time” (Participant 9). Another participant said, “The first four years were the most difficult ones at my school, I could feel and see the discrimination due to my religious affiliation [being Christian], the way they interacted with me and looked at me (Participant 4)

This study shows a strong effect of parental support, and such strong support could be the result of the strongly patriarchal society of Pakistan where women are born and socialized, wherein the influence of the father within the family is the figurative character of the society itself. This study also supports the studies conducted in other parts of the world, such as Europe, North



America, Africa, and other Asian countries. (De Bruyn & Mestry, 2020; Deniz & Demirkasimoğlu, 2022; Hauseman, 2021). The studies also showed that family members became role models providing a strong foundation for their future career choices and professional lives, motivating them in their professional growth and freedom to demonstrate their full potential. The family structure and support from the family members provided the research participants with a strong professional identity, especially finding a role model within their families, such as their father or mother.

### **Peer support**

The responses to the question asked about taking leadership positions varied, such as contributing to their schools' growth, enhancing students' academic performance differently, and using the leadership skills that one has. One of the research participants said that "she found herself better at leading a group because she has leadership skills" (Participant 7). Another research participant shared that their "desire to contribute effectively and positively for the betterment of the students and society" (Participant 11) played an important role in choosing to become a school Principal. There was also a sense of serving one's community as Christian Principals gave the following reason:

I feel it has given me a great opportunity to serve and use my leanings to cultivate in pupils the desire to gain knowledge. It's a platform to work effectively for the institution and pupils contributing to creating future members of society (Participant 3)

There were also instances where the research participants faced hindrances that affected their professional growth and their rise to senior leadership and managerial positions. There were negative perceptions of their male counterparts who questioned their leadership skills and regarded their leadership as inferior to men. One participant while talking about this said,

I think from person to person it differs. Some men accept you as a leader but for most, it is a continuous struggle as I must remind them of my position. As men, they have persuasion to take hold of decision-making power (Participant 3)

Another participant said "I faced some barriers from senior males for not accepting my skills. I was weak as being female and younger among all" (Participant 1) while another participant said,



“It is a male dominating society. So, it is hard to cope with them for any office work”  
(Participant 12).

It was also found that religion played an important role in their success as school leaders and in their professional growth motivating them to continue to work in this field. One of the research participants narrated that “every religion teaches good interpersonal skills which are the basis of every leadership style” and “if a person has a strong religious background, then he/she will be more honest in performing duties and adopting collaborative leadership styles” (Participant 6 & 2). There were participants whose educational experiences in Convent schools not only contributed to their academic and professional learning but also made them into strong women through the female leadership of these schools. A research participant said “I did my schooling from a Convent school run by a group of Nuns (Catholic religious congregation). I still feel a great impact of their leadership skills and shaping my personality and love for education” (Participant 3). There were instances where religion became a hurdle in professional growth and their promotions to leadership positions. Two research participants shared incidents of religious discrimination, especially from their male colleagues because for them association with a certain religion [Christianity in this case] proves that the individuals should not be promoted to leadership positions because they did not have the leadership aptitude, but they should only work as teachers and mid-level managers such as section coordinators.

### **Organizational culture**

The researchers also enquired from the participants about the extent their schools have contributed to their rise and success as leaders. The participants of this study were of the view that their organization, workplace environment, and organizational culture helped them to develop as leaders. However, some although gave credit to their schools and their peers but they also said that they have the potential to shine as leaders even if there were hurdles created by the organization and the culture of an organization. The organization’s male-dominated structure and practices affected the female teachers and female middle-level managers and their professional growth. One of the participants said,

When I joined my school as Principal, the male staff accepted me with heavy hearts. But as time passed, they accepted me as a leader and now they support me in every decision. I feel very lucky that people who used to oppose me in the beginning, are now very cooperative (Participant 8)



Another participant said,

The male staff in my school reluctantly accepted me as their principal. I must prove myself to them that I am a capable leader who would contribute to improving the school's teaching and learning culture and support teachers and staff (Participant 2)

Some participants spoke of the communication gap between the male staff and the newly appointed female Principals but most of the participants did not mention it in their responses to this question. A participant said that in the early months of her promotion as school Principal.

I succeeded a male Principal; the staff did not like me when I gave instructions. It might have hurt their ego that they are following the orders coming from a female school Principal. This attitude of male staff was discouraging, and I feel disappointed; they do not like a female Principal in this school (Participant 1)

### **Conclusion**

The study was aimed to discover and explore factors contributing to shaping the leadership styles of female school Principals. As a result of the analysis of the interview responses, it was concluded that female Principals' leadership styles are rooted in gender discrimination, organizational culture, religious discrimination, balancing professional and personal responsibilities, and lack of support and recognition. Addressing these, requires systemic changes, including promoting gender equity, fostering inclusive organizational cultures, ensuring religious tolerance, supporting work-life balance, and enhancing peer and institutional support for female leaders. These barriers were also endorsed in past studies (Raza, 2016; Zaidi et al, 2018). The effectiveness of female Principals' participation in school education was similarly discussed by Jahan (2022) that concluded that an increased female leaders' participation in the education system would contribute to making female Principals, effective efficient and productive school Principals, able to influence their peers and their teachers, working in their schools.

The results of the study from narrations identified some leadership patterns and styles. The narratives exhibit a blend of transformational, democratic, and situational leadership styles, shaped by their personal experiences, educational backgrounds, and the socio-cultural context of their schools. Transformational leadership is evident in their focus on inspiring and motivating



others, creating a shared vision, and fostering intellectual growth. Democratic leadership is reflected in their collaborative approach and valuing of staff input. Situational leadership is demonstrated by their ability to adapt to the specific challenges and dynamics of their organizational environments. The strong influence of family support and the critical role of peer relationships further enrich their leadership approaches, making them well-rounded and resilient leaders capable of navigating the complexities of their roles. These were consistent with the findings of past studies (Raza, 2016; Memon, 2003; Niqab, 2014).

This study found that self-confidence amongst female Principals is rooted in their positive childhood and formal educational years, and these experiences also contributed to shaping female Principals' ideas of leadership knowledge, skills, and value systems. There is a positive relationship between the family and peer support and support the female Principals to grow as effective school leaders, found consistent with one of the previous study's findings (Jahan, 2022). The study also found resistance from the male peers which was either rooted in females having inferior leadership skills or in religion.

The study found social, cultural, and religious value systems very supportive of female Principals, but this requires further exploration to see whether this could also be true in cases of females working in other professions. These findings were consistent with the work of Ayaz (2024). All of the female participants expressed a progressive view of their respective religions, social, and cultural worldviews, and this positive behavior was reflected in their leadership styles and interactions with their peers as school leaders.

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