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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION SKILL OF HEADTEACHERS AT SECONDARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Present study aimed to examine relationship between transformational leadership style and digital communication skill of head teachers at secondary level. Population was comprised on all secondary school teachers of Lahore city. A sample of 400 male and female teachers was drawn from the population. Two survey questionnaires were used in current study. Reliability of the Transformational Leadership Style scale was .870 and Digital Communication scale was .792 respectively. Data were analysed through inferential statistics. Study concluded that a significant strong positive correlation was found between head teachers' transformational leadership style and their digital communication skill. Findings further concluded that male and female teachers at secondary level have differences of opinion regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill. However, an insignificant difference was found between secondary school teachers' opinion regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill based on their experience. Teachers' based on their qualification have difference of perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skill, however an insignificant difference was found regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style. It is recommended to promote transformational leadership and digital communication among secondary schools' head teachers for the improvement of secondary schools' performance.

Keywords: *Transformational leadership style, Digital communication skill, Secondary schools*

Introduction

Effective leaders play a vital role in enabling systems to grow and thrive. The success of any system heavily relies on its leaders, whose timely and appropriate decisions enhance organizational productivity (Goolamally & Ahmad, 2014). Leaders must be proactive in addressing institutional challenges and capable of articulating their perspectives at all levels. A school's success is rooted in creating a conducive learning environment for students while fostering professional growth among staff. Emotionally literate leaders are particularly effective in achieving these goals, as emotional intelligence significantly enhances the efficacy of school leadership (Hayat & Akbar, 2022).

Sustainable school reform is essential for advancing equity, justice, and success for all students. "School reform in the 21st century requires leaders to transform schools into autonomous, systems-thinking organizations centered on professional learning communities

that embrace change and cultivate a high-performing learning environment for students and teachers" (Moore, 2009). Among the numerous leadership theories developed since the early 20th century, transformational leadership is particularly relevant to the goals of school reform, such as those outlined in the No Child Left Behind initiative (Moore & Rudd, 2006).

Transformational school leaders inspire, motivate, and guide others to achieve goals by aligning their intrinsic values with the school's mission, vision, and values, rather than relying on rewards or consequences, as seen in transactional leadership (Lashway et al., 2006). These leaders focus on three key areas: setting direction with a mission-driven approach, developing individuals with a performance-centered strategy, and fostering a culture of innovation by redesigning the organization (Hallinger, 2003).

In the late 20th century, increasing attention was given to leadership behaviors, leading to transformational leadership becoming one of the most extensively studied models (Northouse, 2019). True to its name, transformational leadership emphasizes driving change, leveraging charisma and emotional influence to create a lasting impact on the organization (Bass, 1990).

Transformational leadership proves highly adaptive during periods of transition, as transformational leaders prioritize building long-term relationships with followers and inspiring them to achieve higher goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Ruddell (2008) found that transformational leadership fosters a commitment to social responsibility and upholds social morality during transitions, particularly among college students. Amid China's evolving policies and economic shifts, societal expectations for future leaders are changing (Yin, 2014). The development of leadership among college students is increasingly linked to fostering communist principles, with morality as a core element (Weng, 2014). Given transformational leadership's capacity to navigate change and its emphasis on encouraging social responsibility and moral integrity, it is a suitable framework for supporting students' leadership development.

Transformational leadership emphasizes individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma (Bass & Avolio, 2007). Such leaders focus intently on their followers, encouraging them to view problems from new perspectives and inspiring them to put in extra effort to achieve group goals (Bass & Avolio, 2007). They are often regarded by colleagues and subordinates as both effective and satisfying leaders (Bass, 2000).

Transformational leaders excel at challenging the status quo within their organizations by adapting their behaviors to align with the various stages of transformation (Bass & Avolio, 2007). When traditional approaches become ineffective, these leaders craft a strategic and motivational vision for the future (Avolio & Bass, 1995). They also influence past leadership experiences to create opportunities and improve their current roles (Bass et al., 2003). The development of transformational leadership skills requires intentional efforts, as individuals are not inherently born with these qualities. Through life experiences, training, and development programs, individuals can cultivate the characteristics necessary for transformational leadership (Length, 2009).

Transformational leaders exhibit more flexible leadership styles, which is especially crucial in dynamic environments common in fast-paced, creative organizations. Unlike transactional leaders, transformational leaders can adapt their approach to be either directive or participative based on the situation within the organization. As a result, transformational leadership incorporates some aspects of transactional leadership but adjusts its style according to the capabilities of followers to achieve organizational goals.

Idealized Influence (II)

According to Avolio (2011), Followers may eventually question a leader as they observe and connect with the leader's behavior. Therefore, to achieve the leader's idealized influence, transformational leaders often need to prioritize their followers' needs over their own personal interests. When leaders take initiative, embracing risks and confronting challenges alongside their followers or even standing at the forefront followers expect the leader to make the right decisions and affirm the moral

consistency of their actions, as well as the leader's core role within the organization. Consequently, Idealized Influence (II) requires the leader's commitment, the courage to face obstacles and risks, and the affirmation and support of teamwork.

Inspirational Motivation (IM)

The behavior of transformational leaders is characterized by clear inspiration, enabling them to achieve greater goals by improving the completion rate and efficiency of their followers' work. Typically, inspirational motivation (IM) leaders encourage followers to think critically and participate in decision-making processes, thereby fostering team spirit through shared goals and visions. When followers understand the importance of their tasks and how to stay committed to them, they are more likely to feel inspired to engage. IM requires leaders to inspire individuals to think, address their higher-level needs, and drive them toward productive action.

Intellectual Stimulation (IS)

Intellectual Stimulation (IS) is an approach that encourages followers to engage in creative thinking and innovation by challenging the status quo, redefining problems, and making new assumptions using diverse methods and perspectives. Transformational leaders adopt a comprehensive view of organizational challenges and foster creative behaviors that break conventional routines with nontraditional approaches, while encouraging followers to think boldly during problem-solving. These leaders stimulate followers' thinking, enhancing their ability to understand and address issues, and align their work behaviors with organizational values, visions, and beliefs.

Individualized Consideration (IC)

Transformational leaders use various leadership styles within organizations to adapt to changing circumstances and diverse responsibilities, helping followers achieve their goals (Northouse, 2019). They view followers as complete individuals, not just employees or subordinates (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Consequently, transformational leaders cultivate a supportive environment where followers can reach their potential by addressing their individual needs. Once these individual needs are identified, leaders create new opportunities and tasks that allow followers to grow and develop. Moreover, through active listening, transformational leaders provide varying levels of care and encouragement to their followers. They promote two-way communication and maintain personalized interactions with followers. Transformational leaders also drive change in organizations, which often face complex and uncertain challenges, by helping followers overcome obstacles through the assignment of appropriate tasks and a supportive environment via Individualized Consideration (IC).

Transformational leadership courses effectively contribute to higher education reform and administration, fostering intellectual growth and providing personalized support to students, while also shaping their civic behavior. However, some researchers contend that the mechanisms through which transformational leadership motivates followers remain unclear and argue that the concept is overly idealistic. Northouse (2019) points out several limitations of transformational leadership. These include the broadness of the concept and its lack of clear definition, the inadequacy of tools used to measure it, which do not focus solely on its development, and the tendency to emphasize traits over behaviors. Despite these criticisms, transformational leadership continues to be a widely favored leadership approach (Abelha et al., 2018).

Digital Communication

According to Widona (2020), "digital literacy is the potential to utilize and generate technology-based content, such as locating and exchanging statistics, responding questions, connecting with others, and computer programming". "Many well-established businesses had been destroyed and replaced to digitization and automation systems".

Furthermore, a study conducted in Uganda by Bigirwa et al. (2020) intended to determine whether the school funding function was necessary for e-learning adoption and what characteristics of the school financing role should be prioritized by midwifery schools.

In this digitally connected and globalized landscape, emphasis is placed on fostering

robust digital communication skills, often linked with collaboration skills, to navigate the complexities of the 21st century (Teruggi & Zuccoli, 2015). While priority is given to proficiency in one's native language, the increasing importance of multilingual communication in a globalized world is being recognized (European Parliament, 2006; Heinrichs, 2016).

As diverse environments become the new norm, fostering open-mindedness among learners to function more adeptly and productively in such settings has emerged as a key educational goal (Heinrichs, 2016). The education system's role extends beyond imparting knowledge to cultivating these vital skills and attitudes essential for thriving in an interconnected and diverse world.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide new chances for knowledge building by allowing users to navigate a virtual world that is not constrained by time or place (Ballew, Omoto, & Winter, 2015). This highlights the significance of using innovation into the educational process for the purpose to promote learning for all students (Alper & Goggin, 2017).

Integrating technology into the classroom has been highlighted as a catalyst for enhancing student engagement, fostering deeper learning, piquing curiosity, and increasing students' willingness to participate actively in their education (Alrasheed, 2021). Moreover, technology is recognized for streamlining teachers' tasks, making their roles more efficient, and cultivating a more dynamic and immersive learning atmosphere that benefits both educators and students alike.

The concept of digital competence encompasses the skills, knowledge, and attitudes allowing learners to utilize digital media critically, responsibly, and creatively across various spheres like participation, work, and problem-solving (Hatlevik et al., 2015). While primarily tied to learner proficiency, its integration within the educational system necessitates the development of digital competence among teachers and school ICT leaders.

A recent study, encompassing a large sample of students, parents, and teachers, aimed to establish a model of factors influencing primary school students' ICT competences (Aesaert et al., 2015). The findings highlighted factors not only at the learner level but also embedded within the broader context of classroom and school culture. The digital competence of school staff can significantly enhance teaching practices, promote pedagogies supporting lifelong learning, and enhance educational efficacy.

The Diffusion of Innovation model, as proposed by Rogers (2003), delves into how novel technological concepts disseminate over time, particularly within educational settings. This model identifies key elements influencing the spread of innovations: the complexity of the innovation itself, communication channels among those disseminating it, the time taken for the innovation process, and the presence of a social system that aids problem-solving when adopting innovative tools.

According to Cohendent and Simon (2017) a model of innovation is a conceptual framework developed for understanding the process of translating an idea into a good or a service that creates value. Beyond this simple and technical definition, a model of innovation can be seen as a core multidisciplinary concept that expresses how change is produced in society. At a given time, a dominant model of innovation results from the efforts of diverse disciplines, including economics, management science, sociology, geography and political science, that come together to explain the production of novelty in society. In line with the perspective of Kuhn (1962), a dominant model of innovation could thus be considered as a paradigm, viewed as “the source of the methods, problem-field, and standards of solution accepted by any mature scientific community at any given time”.

Statement of the Problem

Present study was aimed to examine relationship between head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill at secondary school level. Transformational leadership is centered on addressing the needs of followers rather than focusing solely on the leaders themselves (Northouse, 2019). According to the model, transformational leaders motivate followers to prioritize organizational goals over personal

objectives by enhancing their understanding of the organization's values and goals, as well as meeting their higher-level needs. Ultimately, transformational leadership proves to be highly effective in modern organizations, often surpassing other leadership styles.

Research Hypothesis

H_{o1}: There is no significant correlation between head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill at secondary school level.

Methodology

Present study was based on positivist paradigm along with correlational research design. Population was comprised on all secondary school teachers of Lahore city. A sample of 400 male and female teachers was drawn from the population. Two survey questionnaires were used in current study. Reliability of the Transformational Leadership Style scale was .870 and Digital Communication scale was .792 respectively. Data were analysed through inferential statistics. Correlation was calculated by using Pearson' r. Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA was applied to find differences in secondary school teachers' perceptions regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill based on their demographic variables.

Results

Table 1

Correlation between Transformational Leadership Style and Digital Communication Skill

Variables	M	SD	r- value	Sig.
Transformational Leadership Style	122.58	17.65	.734**	.000
Digital Communication Skill	75.15	10.48		

A correlation between transformational leadership style and digital communication was found significantly positive strong at p≤.05 level of significance. Findings shows digital communication skill is being strongly associated with head teachers' transformational leadership style at secondary school level.

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Table 2

Effect of Transformational Leadership Style on Digital Communication Skill

	Unstandardized Co-efficient	Standardized Co-efficient						
Model	β	Std. Error β	β	T	p	df	F	R^2
Constant	21.72	2.50	.73	21.55	.000	398	464.44	.53
Transformational Leadership Style	.436	.020						

A linear regression analysis shows that transformational leadership style was found to be significant with (R^2 = .53) at p≤0.05 level of significance. It reveals that transformational leadership style was significantly predicted the dependent variable with" (β = .73, F=464.44, p=.000).

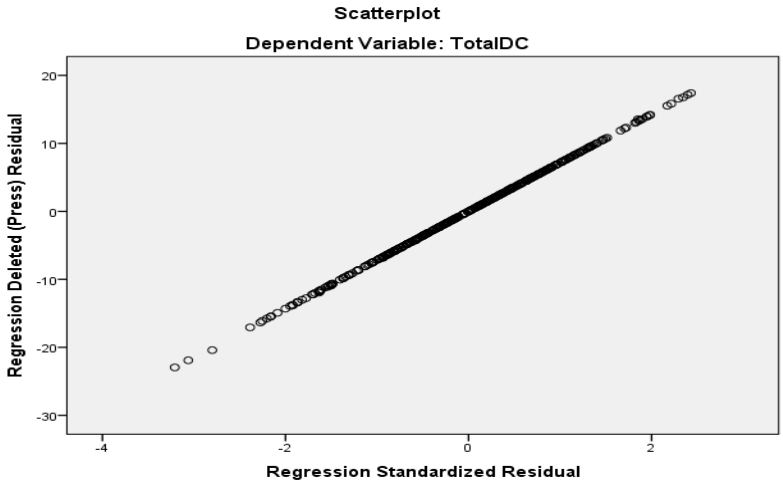


Table 3

Difference between Male and Female Teachers' Perceptions about Head Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style at Secondary Level

Variable	Gender	*N*	M	*SD*	*df*	*t- value*	*Sig.*
Transformational Leadership Style	Male	200	122.87	23.14	263.62	.322	.000
	Female	200	122.30	9.45			

Findings show a significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style at p≤.05 level of significance.

Table 4

Difference between Male and Female Teachers' Perceptions about Head Teachers' Digital Communication Skill at Secondary Level

Variable	Gender	*N*	M	*SD*	*Df*	*t- value*	*Sig.*
Digital Communication Skill	Male	200	75.49	11.88	368.49	648	.001
	Female	200	74.81	8.88			

Findings show a significant difference between male and female secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skills at p≤.05 level of significance.

Table 5

Difference among Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions about Head Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style based on their Academic Qualification

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	547.578	3	182.526	.584	.626
Within Groups	123855.532	396	312.766		
Total	124403.110	399			

Findings show an insignificant difference among secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style based on their academic qualification at p≤.05 level of significance.

Table 6

Difference among Secondary School Teachers' Perception about Head Teachers' Digital Communication Skill based on their Academic Qualification

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	1336.798	3	445.599	4.147	.007
Within Groups	42548.202	396	107.445		
Total	43885.000	399			

Findings show a significant difference among secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skill based on their academic qualification at p≤.05 level of significance.

Table 6(a)

Post hoc Analysis

(I) AQ	(J) AQ	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	*Sig.*
BA/ BSc	MA/MSc	-1.62117	1.11958	.470
	MPhil	-6.89400*	2.33576	.018
	PhD	-7.19044	3.24838	.121
MA/MSc	BA/ BSc	1.62117	1.11958	.470
	MPhil	-5.27283	2.26731	.094
	PhD	-5.56927	3.19952	.304
MPhil	BA/ BSc	6.89400*	2.33576	.018
	MA/MSc	5.27283	2.26731	.094
	PhD	-.29644	3.79990	1.000
PhD	BA/ BSc	7.19044	3.24838	.121
	MA/MSc	5.56927	3.19952	.304
	MPhil	.29644	3.79990	1.000

Post hoc analysis shows a significant difference among secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skill based on their academic qualification. Teachers perception who have qualification B.A/BSc. was significantly different with the teachers who have qualification M.A/ MSc. and MPhil at p≤.05 level of significance.

Table 7

Difference among Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions about Head Teachers' Transformational Leadership Style based on their Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	1693.012	5	338.602	1.087	.367
Within Groups	122710.098	394	311.447		
Total	124403.110	399			

Findings show an insignificant difference among secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style based on their teaching experience at p≤.05 level of significance.

Table 8
Difference among Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions about Head Teachers' Digital Communication Skill based on their Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	623.416	5	124.683	1.136	.341
Within Groups	43261.584	394	109.801		
Total	43885.000	399			

Findings show an insignificant difference among secondary school teachers' perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skills based on their academic qualification at p≤.05 level of significance.

Discussion

Present study aimed to examine relationship between transformational leadership style and digital communication skill of head teachers at secondary level. Study concluded that a significant strong positive correlation was found between head teachers' transformational leadership style and their digital communication skill. The present findings are supported through a study conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) who reported transformational leaders encouraged technology integration into educational setting included effective communication, innovation and adaptability. Dexter (2011) also argued that a facilitator role is being played by the leaders who have transformational leadership style regarding integration of digital technology to enhance organizational effectiveness and communication skills of the employees. Findings further concluded that male and female teachers at secondary level have differences of opinion regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill. According to Eagly and Johnson (1990) male and female leadership plays different roles to show leadership behaviours and communication to interact with others. However, an insignificant difference was found between secondary school teachers' opinion regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill based on their experience. These findings were supported by the finding of a study conducted by Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014) who reported the minimal effect of experience regarding transformational leadership style and digital communication skill. Teachers' based on their qualification have difference of perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skill, however an insignificant difference was found regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style at p≤.05 level of significance. In order to evaluate head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital competence teachers' qualification plays a significant role (Teo, 2015).

Conclusion

Present study aimed to examine relationship between transformational leadership style and digital communication skill of head teachers at secondary level. Study concluded that a significant strong positive correlation was found between head teachers' transformational leadership style and their digital communication skill. Findings further concluded that male and female teachers at secondary level have differences of opinion regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill. However, an insignificant difference was found between secondary school teachers' opinion regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill based on their experience. Teachers' based on their qualification have difference of perception regarding head teachers' digital communication skill, however an insignificant difference was found regarding head teachers' transformational leadership style at p≤.05 level of significance.

Recommendations

Following recommendations were formed from present study.

1. Findings of the study concluded that a significant strong positive correlation was found between head teachers' transformational leadership style and their digital communication skills. Therefore, it is

recommended that regular professional development programs be organized for head teachers with a focus on transformational leadership practices integrated with digital communication competencies.

2. It is recommended that leadership trainings, workshops, seminars and certification programs might be organized for secondary school head teachers to enhance their leadership style and digital communication skills.

3. It is recommended that a mixed-methods approach might be used to examine head teachers' transformational leadership style and digital communication skill at elementary, college and university level.

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